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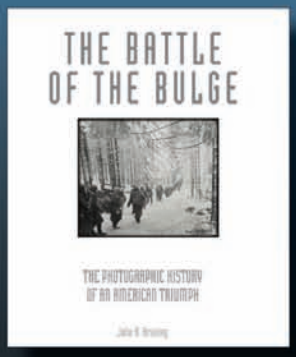

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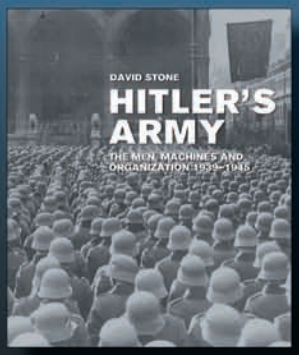

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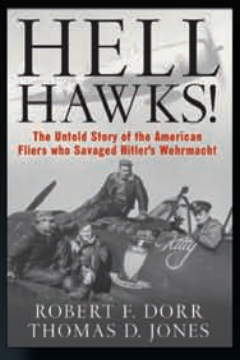

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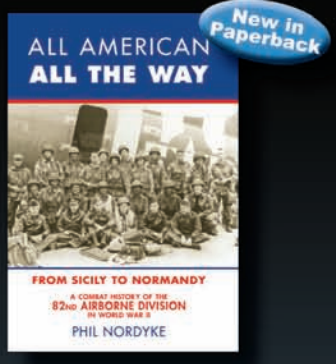

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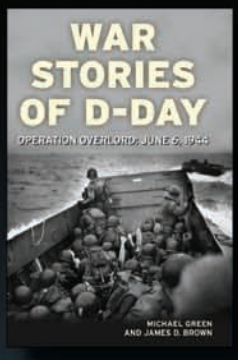

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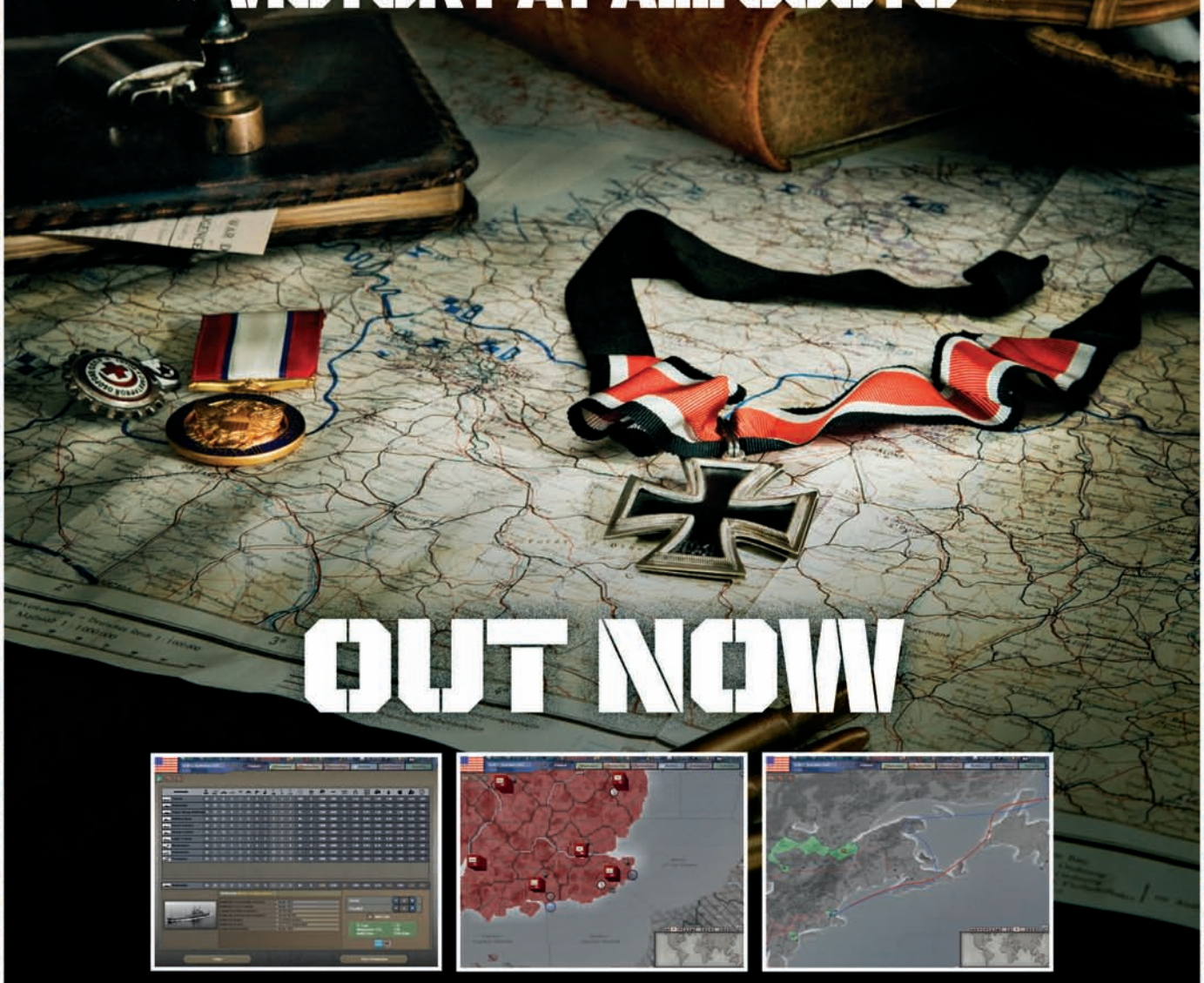

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Cover: A German soldier is ready for close combat on the Eastern Front, 1943. Photo courtesy of ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York.

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Editorial

Could poison darts have helped the Allies win?

DURING THE DARKEST DAYS OF WORLD WAR II, THE BRITISH WAR OFFICE considered any and every option to combat the burgeoning Nazi menace on the continent of Europe. The turning points had yet to take place, and the United States had just entered the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor when, on December 24, 1941, the Singer Sewing Machine Company responded to the British Chemical Defense Research Department following what appeared to be an odd request for needles.

"From your remarks it would seem that that the needles are required for some other purpose, other than sewing machines …" a Singer correspondent wrote after an assessment that the British request for a huge quantity of needles was extraordinary, not to mention that the chemical warfare people had put forth the request as well. In fact, it was extraordinary, something which might just as easily have come from the pages of a comic book or a James Bond style spy thriller.

The Associated Press recently reported that according to newly declassified documents now housed in the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration the British were seriously considering the development and employment of poison darts against enemy troops in Europe. Apparently, in a file on the poison darts which had been maintained by the British War Office, gadget gurus and boffins had determined that it would be possible to drop large quantities of darts tipped with poison above formations of German troops. The darts would achieve sufficient air speed during their descent to pierce clothing and skin, lodging in the unfortunate enemy soldier's flesh.

Prior to Christmas 1941, the British began exploring the potential for their dart scheme and determined that the product constituted "a promising chemical weapon of a novel kind." Novel indeed during an era of plastic explosives shaped to look like household items, rubber trucks and tanks which deceived the Germans prior to the D-Day invasion, and fountain pens which ignited with appropriate pressure.

While the probability of civilian casualties from such a weapon would probably have stopped such a project dead in its tracks (no pun intended) during modern times, the researchers at the biological warfare complex in Porton, England, reasoned that the poison darts could be delivered over a substantial area by Royal Air Force bombers and could disable enemy troop concentrations rapidly.

Supposedly, experiments were conducted with a number of poisons, and the most likely candidate was determined to be a synthetic urethane. The darts would inject a dose of the poison sufficient to disable and kill a man within half an hour if the missile was not plucked from the point of entry within 30 seconds. Of course, multiple impacts would further reduce the individual's odds of survival.

Considering the fact that Great Britain had not yet fully dealt with the threat of invasion by thousands of German soldiers crossing the English Channel aboard open barges, the poison dart idea might just have been a low cost option for what could have been a last ditch defense of the homeland. However, the project never fully developed and was eventually shelved as the tide of war changed at El Alamein and Stalingrad and the Third Reich was forced onto the defensive.

To their credit, although the Singer representatives were scratching their heads with the request, they did offer to cooperate with the Allied war effort to the best of their ability.

As time marches on, more once classified and top secret information concerning World War II will become available to the general public, providing new perspectives and insights into a world at war—literally fighting for survival—against perhaps the greatest evil mankind has ever seen.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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Dispatches

Postcards from the U.S. ATC

Dear Editor,

I enjoy each issue of *WWII History*. When I read the article titled "Postcards from the Third Reich" (November 2009 issue) I especially liked the photograph titled "When in Paris." Attached (at right) is a photograph of the same photo set with American airmen rather than the two Germans. These men are from Group 1403-1408 Air Transport Command and was taken on November 30, 1945. I only know the identity of the third man from the left. He is Richard Schmick.

Tom McGehee
Rowlett, Texas

Swashbucklers vs. Black Sheep

Dear Editor:

In "Flying Leathernecks" (July 2009 issue) Robert Dorr and Fred Borch quote Tommy Tomlinson saying, "Those of us who were in the squadron from the beginning saw more fighting and shot down more Japanese airplanes than the squadron did later when its identity was swapped and it became Boyington's outfit." This is absurd. The "Swashbucklers" shot down 20 Japanese aircraft while Boyington's "Black Sheep" shot down 94 Japanese aircraft. The authors also describe Boyington as "ambitious." It would appear that Tomlinson is the ambitious one.

Bart Schwartz
Phoenix, Arizona

Stuff for an Action Movie

Dear Editor:

Wow! What a priceless story ("Mosquitos on the Prowl," November 2009 issue), and to know that this is NOT fiction! It was impossible to lay down the magazine until I read the article from beginning to end.

I marvel that the Allied forces, resistance members, and French civilians were so efficiently able (with luck thrown in) to accomplish so much—despite bad weather and other stumbling blocks.

There were a few times that I had to chuckle—well, no, I laughed out loud ... escaped prisoners who were put to bed with faces bandaged so they would be unrecognizable, "expectant mothers" mounded with covers, when the Gestapo asked when they were due to deliver, the doctor said at about 3 o'clock in the morning. Then the Gestapo wondered why at 3:00 AM and the doctor replied that "nobody knows" but that was when most babies were born! (Can you imagine the Gestapo being taken in by that answer!?!)

And this one was really good: the madam (of a brothel) saying that one of her greatest pleasures was financing the escapes of the prisoners with the money the Nazis paid to be "entertained" by the madam's girls!!

"Mosquitoes on the Prowl" would be a great true story for a movie.

God had to be watching over Project Jericho for it to have succeeded as well as it did.

WWII History is one of my favorite magazines. Why does it fascinate me? I don't know, but I just feel compelled to read about WWII ... maybe because I was born 23 days after Pearl Harbor Day?

I recently renewed my subscription for two more years. And the guys from the WWII era look forward to reading it while sitting in the waiting room at my chiropractor's office too.

Agnes G. White
Hoffman, Illinois

Japanese Nuclear Program

Dear Editor:

Byron R. MacGregor, who wrote to Dispatches about the two Japanese atomic bomb projects (November 2009 issue), is absolutely correct—this topic would make an excellent article for your magazine.

My World War II library (approximately 400 volumes) has many references to the Korean location operated by the Japanese Navy for atomic research. We know that Germany was supplying uranium to the Japanese by submarine; Germany's U234, with enough uranium for two bombs, surrendered to U.S. forces after the Germans capitulated and was taken to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Its crew said that another German sub, also with uranium in its cargo, had been bound for Japan at the same time, but it was never heard from again. Japanese subs had also reportedly made the trip to get uranium from Germany several times previously.

Many Japanese, who had been in Korea when the war ended, were never heard from again. Were some of them atomic scientists? Did they end up in Russia? Was a bomb produced by the Japanese? My references say "yes" to at least the last of these conjectures. Could they have delivered one to the United States? Yes, with their I-400 subs (three airplanes each), two of which were en route in an easterly direction when the war ended! At the very least, our invading forces could have been targeted on November, 1, 1945, when the invasion was scheduled to begin on Kyushu.

A more difficult connection to prove would be if any of the Japanese facilities were used by the North Koreans in their atomic program. A good author could make much of those coincidences!

Lou Linxwiler
Mesa, Arizona

Dear Editor:

This is a response to the letter by Byron R. MacGregor in the November 2009 issue asking about a possible second nuclear program that was conducted by the Japanese Navy on the Korean peninsula. A book addressing that question, *Japan's Secret War,* by Robert K. Wilcox, has in fact been published. The book, subtitled "Japan's Race Against Time to Build Its Own Atomic Bomb," was published in 1985 by William Morrow. According to the author, the project was conducted at a secret site in or near Konan (the Japanese name for Hungnam), in a remote part of northern Korea. Konan was the center of one of the largest industrial complexes in Asia, and apparently was unknown to the Allies. A bomb was assembled in a cave near Konan on August 10, 1945, and test fired on a small island just off the north Korean coast on the morning of August 12. The Japanese, according to Wilcox, were racing against time to do this because the Russians were very close, having declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945, and having invaded Manchuria, just to the north, on August 9. After the test, the Japanese had little time left to do anything but attempt to destroy all traces of the project, to try to keep as much information as possible about the project from falling into the hands of the Russians.

The purpose of the project had been to develop nuclear bombs that the Japanese Navy could use in kamikaze planes to throw against American forces as they landed on Japan's shores.

Although some of what Wilcox says in the book seems rather conjectural and he does not provide definitive confirmation that such a project existed, he does provide a rather large list of sources, both primary and secondary. Overall, the book provides suggestive evidence that the Japanese Navy did have a nuclear project that was conducted in a remote part of northern Korea and they detonated some sort of nuclear device in the closing days of the war.

A few other books about World War II have also mentioned a secret Japanese nuclear bomb project that was conducted in northern Korea during the war.

I definitely agree with Mr. MacGregor that whether or not the Japanese successfully built a nuclear bomb during WWII and tested it represents one of the few remaining mysteries of the war and definitely merits further investigation. This, unfortunately, would likely be very difficult as it would require the Russians to cooperate by releasing what information they have, since it was their forces that captured the site at the end of the war.

Claybourne C. Snead
Arlington, Virginia

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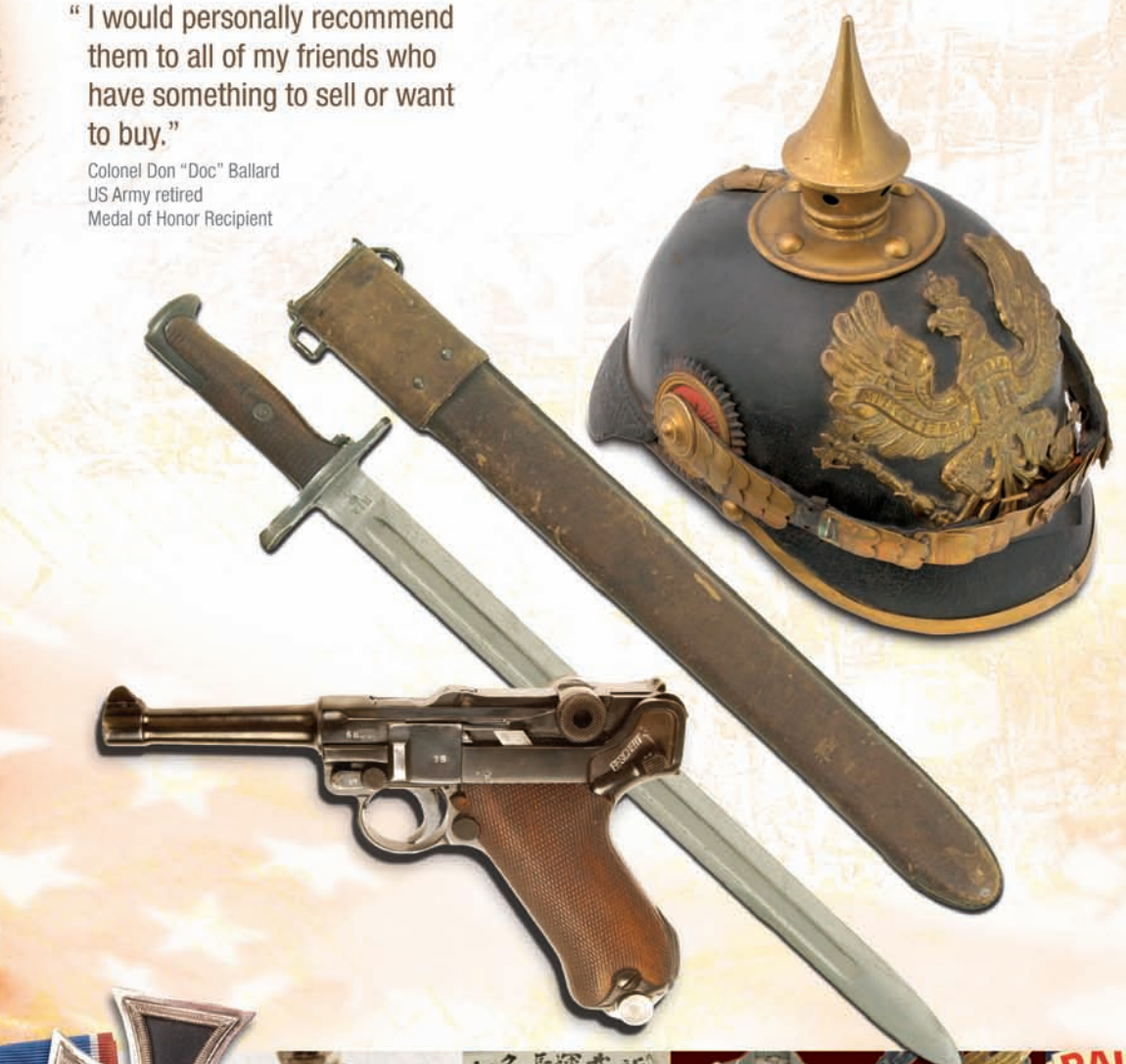

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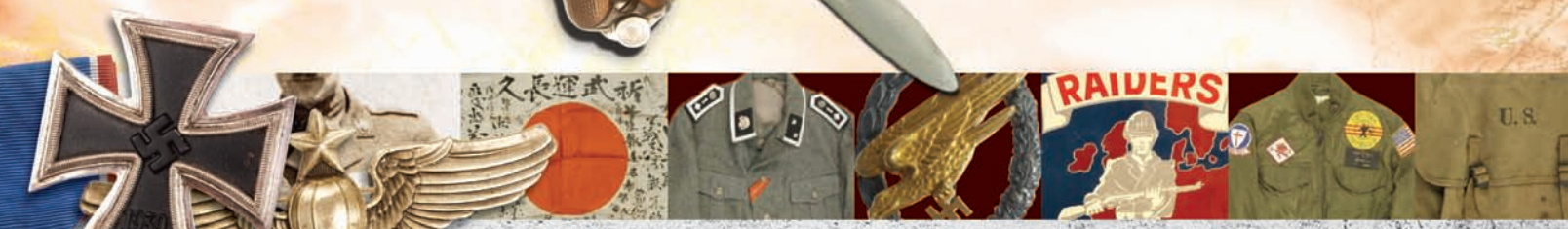

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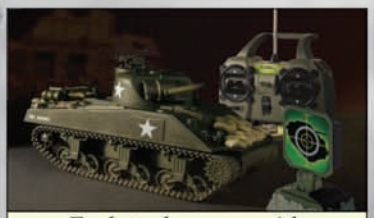

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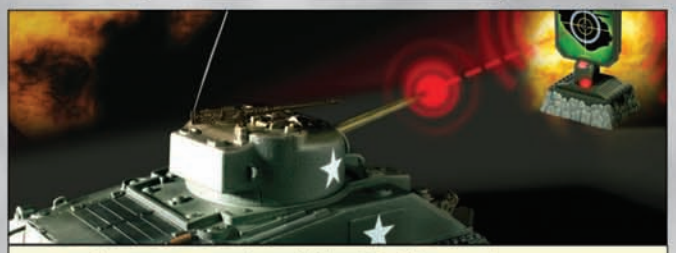

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By Sam McGowan

All photos: National Archives

Whistling Death

The Chance-Vought F4U Corsair proved a scourge of Japanese aircraft in the Pacific.

THANKS TO THE RATHER FAR-FETCHED MID-1970S TV SERIES *BLACK SHEEP* *Squadron,* the bent-wing image of the Chance-Vought F4U Corsair is no doubt one of the most vivid of the World War II fighters in the minds of most Americans. The dark blue forms of the squadron's Corsairs came on the screen every week, thrilling millions who watched the fictionalized exploits of the men of VMF-214, the United States Marine Corps fighter squadron commanded by the legendary Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, as they battled sinister Japanese aces in the skies over the Solomon Islands in 1943.

The events depicted in the series were contrived, but the airplanes were real, and the series was based on real men who had flown the same type of fighter against the Japanese several decades earlier when the bent-wing Corsair symbolized Marine Corps Aviation.

The Corsair was the first of several successful fighter designs built around Pratt & Whitney's R-2800 Double Wasp engine, so called because of the double bank of nine cylinders that was designed to increase the power of the company's famous Wasp engine. United Aircraft's Vought division submitted the design in competition for a new fighter requirement put forth by the U.S. Navy in early 1938 for a high-performance carrier-borne fighter that would be capable of achieving and maintaining air superiority above the fleet.

Its distinctive gull wings and the rearward location of the cockpit are readily discernible in this view of a Chance Vought F4U Corsair in flight above the island of Bougainville in 1944.

To make the most efficient use of the powerful engine, Vought's design team chose an especially large propeller, a choice that extended the length of the fuselage by several feet so the ends of the propeller blades would not reach the ground and also led to the airplane's unique wings. The elongated nose severely restricted visibility, particularly when the airplane was on the ground, making the Corsair difficult to taxi. It also limited forward visibility during the critical approach to landing, as the end of the runway would completely disappear from the pilot's view when the airplane was on short final. Unfortunately, the lack of forward visibility reduced the Corsair's capabilities as a carrier airplane, although this would turn out to be a bonus for the Marines in the early days of the war when high-performance aircraft were at a premium.

The size of the prop also led to the most prominent of the Corsair features. Instead of using longer landing gear that would be difficult to stow in the wing of an airplane designed to operate off aircraft carriers, the designers decided instead to bend the wings into a gull shape so the landing-gear section of the wing would be closer to the ground than the fuselage. The bent wings allowed the use of shorter struts while keeping the propeller blades clear of the ground and gave the fighter the gull-wing appearance that distinguished Corsairs from other fighters of World War II. Only the Stuka dive-bomber used by Germany's Luftwaffe in Europe was characterized by a similarly shaped wing.

By the spring of 1940, the prototype Corsair was ready to fly, and on May 29 it took to the skies for the first time from the Vought factory at Bridgeport, Connecticut. There is confusion over the actual date of the first flight. Some sources say it was on April 29, and others set the date a month later on May 29, which is probably the correct date. The design was not without faults, and test flights often ended prematurely due to mechanical problems.

The fifth flight ended in disaster when the airplane ran out of fuel and had to be crash-landed on a golf course. Although the airframe was salvageable, the prototype suffered major damage in the crash, which caused a setback in the test program. By October, it was back in the air, and on the first day of the month the airplane made a short flight from the Vought factory at Bridgeport to Hartford and was clocked at an average

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ABOVE: An F4U Corsair comes in for a landing aboard an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. Although its early trials as a carrier-based fighter revealed some problems, the Corsair was eventually adapted to operations aboard carriers and proved to be a fine dogfighter and ground-support aircraft.
OPPOSITE: The Chance Vought F4U-2 Corsair made its combat debut in the Pacific with U.S. Marine Corps fighter squadrons based on Guadalcanal in the Solomons.

ground speed of 405 miles per hour.

Modern aviation media experts claim this as the first time a fighter had flown faster than 400 miles per hour in level flight, but that's really not true. The reported 400 miles per hour was actually ground speed, which is the actual speed of an airplane over the ground, a combination of true airspeed and a correction for a headwind or tailwind. In this instance, the Corsair's speed was boosted by a considerable tailwind. Lockheed's prototype XP-38 had exceeded 400 miles per hour during a cross-country flight more than a year previously. Republic's P-47, which was still under development with the same engine, would be considerably faster. The official top speed for the first production F4Us was only 405 mph, although later models were capable of speeds in excess of 450 mph.

Design problems hampered the new fighter's production, and it was not until June 1942 that the first production airplane rolled off the assembly line at Stratton. The Navy took delivery of its first F4U a month later. It did not take long for Navy test pilots to realize they had a problem on their hands. The Corsair was difficult to handle, and some wags later referred to it as The Ensign Eliminator due to the requirement for an experienced pilot to be able to handle it in the edges of the realm of flight.

Visibility problems caused by the long nose were the most serious. As a result, the Corsair failed to pass carrier trials, and it was two years before the Navy approved it for shipboard operations. Meanwhile, Marine Corps fighter squadrons had gone into combat in the Southwest Pacific with obsolete Grumman F4F Wildcats and needed something capable of intercepting Japanese bombers at high altitude. Since the Navy rejected the F4U as a fleet fighter, the Navy Department decided to give the Corsair to the Marines and adopt the Grumman F6F Hellcat as the Navy's primary fighter.

Both the Navy and Marine Corps were hurting for a decent fighter in 1942, but due to heavy carrier losses at the battles of Coral Sea and Midway, naval aviation was temporarily out of the war and could wait until new carriers could be launched and made ready for sea to equip its squadrons. The Grumman F6F Hellcat, which used the same engine as the Corsair, was under development, and deliveries were projected to start soon so the Navy adopted it as its primary fleet fighter.

The Marines, on the other hand, had been sent to the South and Southwest Pacific where Pacific Ocean area of operations forces were battling the Japanese on Guadalcanal. The Corps' F4F Wildcats lacked the performance to intercept the Japanese bombers that came over regularly to blast Henderson Field, although superior Marine pilots were able to more than hold their own against the Japanese bombers and fighters when they were able to gain altitude before the enemy aircraft reached their targets or when they came down to lower altitudes where they were more evenly matched.

Army P-39s and P-40s were also based at Henderson as part of the "Cactus Air Force," and while in some regards they were superior to the Wildcat, which required the pilot to hand-crank the landing gear after takeoff, they were still incapable of gaining altitude in time to intercept a bomber formation. The Corsair's performance held a lot of promise, although by the time it entered combat the battle of Guadalcanal had been decided. Consequently, Marine F4Us would see service primarily in the escort and ground-attack role rather than as interceptors.

VMF-124 was the first Marine squadron to receive Corsairs, and by the end of 1942 the squadron had become operational. They were immediately deployed to Guadalcanal, arriving on the night of February 11-12. The following morning the squadron went out on a rescue mission. Before the day was out, squadron airplanes had logged nine hours in the air. On February 13, a flight of 12 Corsairs from VMF-124 escorted Thirteenth Air Force B-24 bombers to Bougainville, the longest escort mission of the war in the Solomons at the time.

The Corsair's first exposure to air-to-air combat occurred the following day, when VMF-124 contributed several airplanes for a joint-service force made up of Army P-38s and P-40s, Navy Liberators, and the Marine F4Us. Eight American fighters and two bombers were lost, including a pair of Corsairs, one of which collided with one of the three Japanese Zekes that went down in the battle. It was an inauspicious start for the Corsair.

The February 14 losses led to a temporary cancellation of further daylight raids against Japanese positions, and the combined force of Army and Navy Liberators turned to night attack until fighter strength could be built up. Daylight missions did not resume until March 28 when eight VMF-124 Corsairs were part of a strike force against the Shetlands. The Marines missed out as seven Corsairs turned back, along with three of the eight P-38s. The rest of the force tangled with a formation of Japanese Nakijima floatplane fighters and shot down eight of them.

Four days later, Corsair pilots began making their mark. A flight of Corsairs had just been relieved on combat air patrol over the Russell Islands by a flight of P-38s when the Army formation was attacked by a large number of Japanese fighters. The Marines returned to the battle, and the combined force accounted for 20 Japanese aircraft. Three were credited to 2nd Lieutenant Ken Walsh of VMF-124, who would become the first Corsair ace and would later be decorated with the Medal of Honor. Walsh was a former enlisted pilot who had only recently been commissioned, but he had been flying observation planes, scout bombers, and fighters in the Marine Corps since 1938 and was probably one of the most experienced pilots in the squadron.

Walsh and the rest of VMF-124 missed out on another huge air battle on April 7 because the squadron had left for rest and recuperation in Australia three days before when VMF-213 arrived at Henderson Field. When radar picked up a large force of Japanese planes headed for the Russells, 76 fighters, including Army P-38s and P-39s and Marine F4Fs and F4Us, were sent up to meet them. Army pilots were credited with 13 of the 39 Japanese airplanes that went down that day—Marine and Navy fighters got the rest.

By May, VMF-124 was back in action, and on the 13th Ken Walsh became the first Corsair ace when he shot down three Zekes, bringing his total to six. Such victories as Walsh's over the three Zeros proved that the previously feared Zero was no longer superior to U.S. naval fighters. By the middle of August, Walsh had shot down 10 Japanese planes and was now a double ace. On August 15, Walsh shot down three more Japanese planes before his Corsair was shot up by another in an action when the Marines were badly outnumbered. Walsh repeatedly dived into the Japanese formation before his airplane was knocked out of action. VMF-124 pilots claimed 10 victories that day.

On August 30, Walsh performed another heroic action that, combined with the events of August 15, would result in the Medal of Honor. He was part of a mission escorting Navy Liberators against Kahili airfield on Bougainville when his airplane developed engine trouble and he was forced to land at Vella Lavella, where he jumped into another Corsair and took off to catch up with the formation. A force of about 50 Zekes attacked the Liberators, and Walsh went after them. He shot down four before his own Corsair was shot down and he went into the sea. He was rescued and soon went back home to receive the Medal of Honor. He would return to the Pacific for another combat tour in Corsairs with VMF-222 in the Philippines and would finish the war with 21 confirmed kills, the last one being a kamikaze he shot down during the Battle of Okinawa.

The most famous of the Corsair squadrons, thanks largely to the fame of one of its commanders, was VMF-214. The squadron entered combat a few days after VMF-124 but was equipped with F4F Wildcats during its first tour. After rest and reequipping with Corsairs, VMF-214 returned to combat in June 1943. On August 6 the squadron, then known as The Swashbucklers, produced its first ace when former enlisted pilot Al Jensen shot down a Japanese Jake fighter and two Zekes to add to the two victories he had scored when he was flying Wildcats.

On August 28, Jensen earned the Navy Cross when he attacked the Japanese airfield at Kahili. He was officially credited with 15 aircraft destroyed on the ground, but aerial photographs taken the next day showed 24 destroyed airplanes on the field. In early September, squadron personnel went to Australia in preparation for returning to the States, and when they left the squadron was broken up and the designation was given to a new unit that was being formed locally.

Author and Hollywood producer Stephen J. Cannell depicted the men of VMF-214 as a drunken bunch of misfits in his 1970s television series *Black Sheep Squadron,* a depiction that did not set well with the aging veterans who had actually made up the unit. While the description did perhaps fit their commander, Major Gregory Boyington, who had a reputation as a hell-raiser and malcontent who could not get along with his superiors, the squadron was actually made up of pilots with varying backgrounds who were scattered around the South Pacific in nonflying positions or who had arrived in the theater as replacements but had not been assigned to combat units.

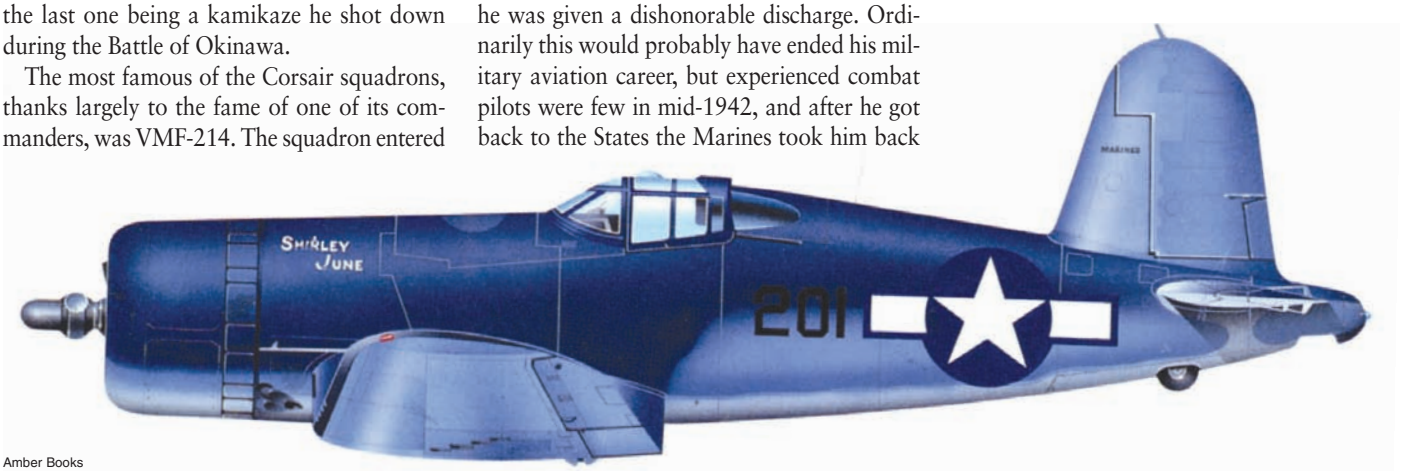
Boyington was a prewar Marine Corps pilot who had left the service to fight in China with the American Volunteer Group, apparently to earn money to pay off his huge pile of debts. Although he was credited with six Japanese planes, including 3.75 on the ground, he got into trouble with General Claire Chennault and went AWOL from the group, an act for which he was given a dishonorable discharge. Ordinarily this would probably have ended his military aviation career, but experienced combat pilots were few in mid-1942, and after he got back to the States the Marines took him back and gave him the rank of major.

Boyington went to Guadalcanal in early 1943, and after a stint as a staff officer, took command of VMF-122, which was still equipped with Wildcats. He was constantly butting heads with a superior officer with whom he had a prewar history, and by mid-September he was in an administrative position matching up newly arrived replacement pilots with combat squadrons.

There was a shortage of combat units in the Solomons, and someone, allegedly Boyington, suggested forming a new squadron made up of pilots who were already in the theater but were not assigned to combat units. According to Boyington's memoir, he was on desk duty in charge of assigning replacement pilots to squadrons and suggested that he be allowed to form a squadron of his own. Perhaps to get him out of their hair, the staff of Marine Air Wing One apparently went along with the plan, and Boyington was placed in command of a new VMF-214.

Twenty-six pilots were pulled together, including eight who had been in VMF 122 with Boyington, a couple who had flown with other Corsair squadrons, three who had flown with the Royal Canadian Air Force, four who had instructed in Corsairs in the States, and several who had been flying Wildcats. All in all, the men of the soon to be famous squadron were a pretty experienced bunch. The original VMF-214 pilots were sent back to the United States, and the new unit decided to forgo the old name Swashbucklers in favor of a new one that they felt better reflected their former status as pilots with no family connection—Black Sheep.

The Black Sheep moved to their combat base in the Russell Islands in September and flew their first combat mission on the 14th. Over the next few months, they racked up one of the most impressive combat records of any military aviation unit in history. In 84 days of combat, the men of VMF-214 were credited with over



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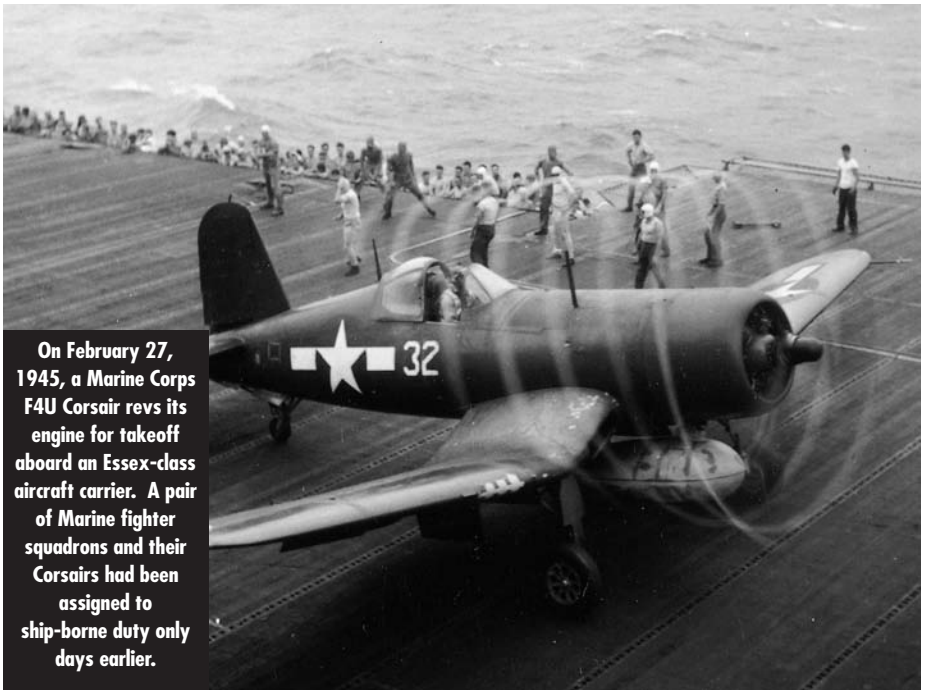

On February 27, 1945, a Marine Corps F4U Corsair revs its engine for takeoff aboard an Essex-class aircraft carrier. A pair of Marine fighter squadrons and their Corsairs had been assigned to ship-borne duty only days earlier.

200 Japanese planes destroyed or damaged in the air and on the ground, as well as dozens of barges and other ground targets. Almost 100 of their kills—94 confirmed—were air-to-air.

Their commander, Major Boyington, led the pack. By the time he was shot down over Rabaul on January 3, 1944, he had been credited with 22 victories. His AVG victories brought his total to 28. Boyington was captured and spent the rest of the war as a POW. After the war, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Not long after the loss of their commander, VMF-214 was again broken up after being awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. The designation would reemerge later in the war as a Corsair squadron flying off the carrier USS *Franklin*.

It was the Corsair that led to famed aviator Charles Lindbergh's combat role in World War II. Blackballed by the White House and U.S. Army Air Forces commander General Henry H. Arnold because of his outspoken opposition to U.S. involvement in the war in Europe and the prewar resignation of his commission as a colonel in the Army Air Corps, Lindbergh sought a position in the aviation industry. In early 1942 United Aircraft President Eugene Wilson, a friend of Lindbergh's, offered him a position with the company, but the offer was withdrawn due to pressure from the White House.

Lindbergh instead went to work for Henry Ford, who had no fear of the Roosevelt Administration and whose huge company was badly needed to produce war materials, including Consolidated Aircraft Company's B-24 Liberator, Republic's P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, and Pratt & Whitney's family of engines. After Lindbergh became involved in high-altitude research work in fighters, Wilson reconsidered his relationship with the White House and asked Lindbergh to come to work for him in the Corsair program. At first, Lindbergh went back and forth between the two companies, but by the spring of 1944 he was working solely for United in research and development. As an experienced military pilot, he flew Corsairs on maneuvers with Marine units and on one occasion engaged two of the Corps' best fighter pilots in a mock dogfight and beat them both. He was a man who knew the Corsair, and the leaders of Marine Aviation knew it.

Lindbergh's involvement with the Corsair placed him in contact with many members of the military, and in the spring of 1944 he attended a meeting with Marine Corps representatives in Washington, D.C. During the course of the meeting, Lindbergh mentioned that United was getting conflicting reports on the capabilities of single- and twin-engine fighters, and he thought it would be a good idea for someone with considerable Corsair experience to visit Marine units in the Pacific and observe combat operations firsthand.

Marine Brig. Gen. Louis Wood said, "Why don't you go?" Lindbergh replied that his relationship with the White House was not very good. Wood said that the White House did not need to know and that he would make the necessary arrangements for the trip.

In April 1944, Lindbergh left for the South Pacific as a Corsair technical representative with authorization to fly missions as an observer. The first leg of the journey was a cross-country flight to deliver a Corsair to the Marine airfield at El Toro, California. He remained in California for a few days, visiting Marine fighter squadrons and talking to the pilots. His next stop was Hawaii, where he took time to visit bases and meet with fighter pilots, including a visit to Midway atoll before continuing to the South Pacific. He visited with Marine squadrons out of Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal, and he started flying combat missions out of Green Island on May 22.

At first, there was some reluctance by senior Marine officers to allow a civilian to fly combat missions, but when a few flights to test the water produced no repercussions, the Lone Eagle was turned loose in South Pacific skies. By June 10, he had flown 13 missions, including escort missions and strafing attacks on Japanese barges. Lindbergh left the Marines for a while to fly P-38s with the Army, but stopped off for a few more weeks with Marine squadrons at Kwajalein and Tarawa before he returned to the United States. He intended to spend a few days in Guam, but decided to stop in the Marshall Islands first.

During his second visit with the Marines, the veteran aviator taught Corsair pilots new techniques for dive-bombing and convinced them that the fighter could carry much larger bombs than they believed. He proved to the Marines that the Corsair could carry a 3,000-pound bomb load on September 3, 1944, when he dropped three 1,000-pound bombs on Wotje Atoll. On September 8, he dropped the first 2,000-pound bomb ever delivered by a Corsair in another attack on Wotje. Five days later, he upped the ante to 4,000 pounds when he took off with one 2,000-pound bomb and two 1,000-pounders to drop in another attack.

Lindbergh also taught the Marines how to conserve fuel by operating at lower rpms and higher manifold pressure, a technique that extended the combat range of the fighters by several hundred miles. He had taught the same technique to Army pilots, a technique that allowed fighter pilots to escort bombers much deeper into Japanese territory than they had ever gone.

While the Marines were making the reputation of the Corsair, the airplane had been designed to operate off carriers and had originally been intended for operations with the fleet. But for more than a year the Navy restricted its Corsairs to operations from land bases with Marine squadrons.

It fell to the British to prove that the huge fighter could be operated from ships. The Royal Navy purchased Corsairs for fleet use, and it was Royal Navy pilots who finally came up

with a method that allowed the long-nosed airplanes to land on carriers. Instead of lining up with the carrier deck while several thousand feet out in a normal landing procedure, the British pilots began flying a curving approach that allowed them to keep the landing signals officer in sight until the airplane was in the landing groove, and it was just a simple matter of cutting power and letting the airplane touch the deck and engage the wires. Since the fighters would be halted by arresting gear and towed or pushed off the flight deck, taxiing was unnecessary.

The U.S. Navy decided to adopt the method and began equipping some of its own fighter squadrons with Corsairs and, since the war in the Solomons was winding down, made plans to station several Marine squadrons aboard ship once the pilots had been carrier qualified.

The first U.S. Navy Corsair squadron to see combat was VF-17, the Jolly Rogers. VF 17 was organized in early 1943 for assignment to the carrier *Bunker Hill*, one of the first of the Essex-class "fast carriers," but special considerations led to its combat role as a land-based unit.

The Corsair was not a popular airplane in the Navy, and a lot of pilots wanted nothing to do with it. VF-17 commander, Lt. Cmdr. John Blackburn, was no exception, but he decided the airplane had some redeeming factors. After flying it for a while he was convinced it was actually an excellent fighter. The squadron trained at Norfolk, Virginia, and on the Outer Banks of North Carolina; it then joined the carrier at Norfolk shortly after it was launched at Quincy, Massachusetts, in July 1943.

The Corsair's problems were apparent to Blackburn and the pilots of his squadron, but he elected to turn down an offer to replace his F4Us with the new Grumman F6F Hellcat, which was just coming into the naval inventory. *Bunker Hill* set out for the Pacific in September by way of the Panama Canal and San Diego. The men of VF-17 were expecting to continue on to the Pacific for a combat tour, flying off the carrier, but the plan suddenly changed right after *Bunker Hill* departed San Diego. Blackburn was ordered to bring his airplanes and men back to San Diego. Instead of participating in the first sortie by the Essex-class ships, they were being sent to Espiritu Santo for land-based duty.

The men of VF-17 had proven that they could operate off a carrier with the F4U, but there was another issue. As the only operational Corsair squadron in the Navy, VF-17 would face some unique supply problems in fleet use. Maintaining the squadron's airplanes would require special stores of aircraft parts, and replacement parts for a single squadron would

Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, commander of the Black Sheep Squadron, climbs atop the wing of his F4U Corsair fighter. Boyington became one of the leading aces of the Pacific War flying the Corsair.

be difficult to procure in a timely fashion through normal supply channels. To alleviate the problem, the Navy decided to use the squadron in the Solomons, where the Marines already had a number of squadrons flying F4Us and there were already adequate spare parts.

VF-17 arrived on Guadalcanal in late October, then proceeded north to its new base on New Georgia. Over the next several months, the men of VF-17 racked up an impressive record as 13 squadron members achieved ace status. On one mission in early November, members of the squadron landed back on *Bunker Hill* to refuel and rearm during the initial carrier attacks on Rabaul.

Operations around Rabaul were the focus of VF 17 missions. The Army's Fifth Air Force had been operating against the Japanese stronghold for more than a year on mostly harassing missions, but with the Allied victory in the Solomons, the Americans were free to concentrate on the heavily defended target and allow Fifth Air Force to devote its attention to New Guinea. VF-17 fighters accounted for 60.5 Japanese airplanes in January alone, when the battle against Rabaul was at its height.

With bases closer to the target area, American aircraft were able to effectively neutralize the Japanese base while submarines, carrier aircraft, and land-based bombers prevented reinforcement and resupply. The war began moving north into the Central Pacific, and the Japanese forces defending Rabaul were bypassed after Japan decided to discontinue attempts to replace their aircraft losses. As things wound down around Rabaul, the intensity of combat decreased. In early March, VF-17 was relieved and the squadron deactivated.

Throughout the Solomons campaign, Marine F4U squadrons and the lone squadron of Navy Corsairs were involved primarily as escort fighters and in attacks on Japanese shore installations and airfields, with frequent barge-hunting forays against Japanese coastal shipping. As Japanese air defenses lost their strength, Corsair squadrons were trained to begin operating in the close air support role, a mission that had developed during the battle for Guadalcanal using Marine F4Fs and Army P-39s.

The Marine Corps had become aware of the value of air attack in close support of troops in the 1920s when the Corps was involved in operations in Central America, but few steps had been taken to implement it as a Marine aviation mission. The concept of close air support became part of Marine doctrine in the 1930s, but little attention was paid to it in the planning for the invasion of Guadalcanal.

A handful of missions were flown by F4F pilots early in the campaign, but it was not until the Battle of Bloody Ridge that close air support proved decisive. Early on September 13, 1942, the Marines appealed to the commander of the 67th Fighter Squadron, an Army unit operating Bell P-400s, for a strafing mission at daybreak the next morning. Shortly after midnight, a large Japanese force launched an attack on what the Marines were calling Bloody Ridge, later referred to as Edson's Ridge after the legendary commander of the 1st Raider Battalion.

At dawn, three P-400s took off and immediately attacked. Two were hit by ground fire, one during its first run and the other during its second, and had to return to Henderson Field, but the third pilot came around for a third pass and kept strafing until he ran out of ammunition. The effect on the Japanese was devastating. Hundreds were killed and wounded, and the survivors retreated into the jungle. Later that day, General Alexander A. Vandegrift, the commander of the Marines on the island, visited the three airmen and told them that their attack had decided the outcome of the battle of Guadalcanal.

After Guadalcanal, the Marine Corps began emphasizing close air support, but it would be nearly two years before the F4U became heavily involved. Planning for operations at Tarawa and the Central Pacific called for close air support by Navy and Marine squadrons flying Douglas SBD dive-bombers and F6F Hellcats. Even though they had not been assigned the close air support mission as yet, Marine Corsair squadrons began conducting dive-bombing missions, and after Lindbergh demonstrated that the Corsair could carry a 4,000-pound bomb load, the F4U became even more important as an attack weapon.

In addition to bombs, the Navy began equipping the Corsair to carry the new high-velocity aircraft rockets that the service had developed, and hard points were installed under the wings that allowed them to carry eight rockets to supplement the firepower of their six .50-caliber machine guns on strafing missions. Corsairs were also equipped to carry napalm as well as high-explosive bombs.

By late 1944, the Department of the Navy had decided to make the Corsair its primary close air support aircraft now that the airplane had been adapted for carrier operations. Previously, Marine squadrons were not assigned to carrier duty nor were Marine pilots carrier qualified due to the increasing need for Navy pilots to staff the squadrons planned for the new fast carriers. With the battle for the Solomons over and with less need for ground-based squadrons in the Central Pacific, many of the Marine fighter squadrons were reassigned to the fleet for carrier duty with the mission of providing close air support for Marines in amphibious operations.

The landing on Iwo Jima was the first to see the Corsair as the primary close air support aircraft. Once again, VMF-124 was first, as the squadron led an attack on the invasion beach by 24 F4Us and an equal number of F6Fs flying from Essex-class carriers with napalm, rockets, and strafing. Although the missions were successful, the Marine squadrons operated over Iwo for only three days. The threat of kamikaze attacks led the Navy to decide to attack air bases on Honshu, and the Marine

Corsairs went north with the carriers, leaving the Marines without close air support until Army fighters could be flown in.

Corsairs were also expected to provide close air support for the landings on Okinawa, but the intensity of kamikaze attacks caused Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the senior officer in command of the invasion, to order the Corsairs to fly combat air patrols to defend against incoming suicide bombers.

Corsairs would play a role during the Philippine campaign, as two Marine fighter groups, MAG-12 and MAG-14, made a nearly 2,000-mile journey from the Solomons to take up station onshore on Leyte and Samar. The Corsairs of MAG-12 were brought up to serve with the 308th Bombardment Wing of the Army's Fifth Air Force in the battle to liberate the Philippines. Although the initial plan had called for the air role in the Philippines to be an all-Army show, events and military politicking on the part of senior Marine officers under Army General Douglas MacArthur's command led to the introduction of Marine squadrons.

The first Corsairs arrived at Tacloban in early December and immediately went into combat under Army control. The Marines flew with Army P-38s and P-40s on interception and ground attack missions as they fought to deprive the Japanese of the ability to reinforce their forces on Leyte. The aviators not only had to contend with enemy opposition, they also had to be wary of trigger-happy sailors. One Corsair pilot, Lieutenant R.M. Robinson, was shot down by a PT boat and then rescued by the same boat that shot him down!

In spite of enemy opposition that cost the group nine pilots and 34 airplanes, MAG-12 Corsairs accounted for more than 40 Japanese planes and sank seven destroyers, nine freighters, and three troop transports in less than a month. At least 11 other Japanese ships had been damaged. MAG-14 also came up from the Solomons and began operating from Samar in early January 1945. By the time they arrived, the Leyte campaign was winding down, and the war in the Philippines was entering a new phase. MAG-14 Corsairs joined MAG-12 in strikes on targets in the southern Philippines.

One of the MAG-14 pilots was Ken Walsh, now a captain. The Marine pilots had developed techniques for attacking ships at very low altitude, a tactic they perhaps adopted after the successes of Army light and medium bombers in New Guinea. On February 23, 1945, a flight of Corsairs sank a submarine that they spotted on the surface off Cebu. The four pilots failed to sink either of two subs sighted during their initial attack, but after running out of bombs they returned to their base to rearm. The four Corsairs then dropped down for a wave-top skip-bombing attack with 1,000-pound bombs and sent one of the submarines to the bottom. It was believed to be the first submarine sinking by Corsairs.

National Archives

Marines of the Black Sheep Squadron in Pobang, Korea, load a lethal 5-inch rocket on a Corsair fighter-bomber. The Corsair was the only World War II fighter to continue in production after the war.

Although Marine aircraft were initially prevented from carrying out their new role of close air support of ground troops in the Philippines, by February 1945 Corsairs and Marine SBD dive-bombers were heavily engaged in support of Army ground units. Far East Air Forces commander General George C. Kenney had been less than enthusiastic about close air support because he was afraid that ground troops would come to rely on it to seize their objectives and thus lose the aggressiveness necessary for ground combat. Many of the close air support missions were flown in support of indigenous guerrilla units on Mindanao and in northern Luzon. Corsairs and other Marine aircraft were able to provide firepower that helped the guerrilla units overcome their lack of heavy weapons.

The Corsair had originally been designed to defend the fleet, and its finest hour as an interceptor was during the Battle of Okinawa when F4Us provided the first line of defense against almost 1,000 Japanese kamikazes that were launched against the fleet from airfields on Kyushu and Formosa. Considerably faster than the F6F Hellcat and with superior climb performance, the Corsair was more suited to the task of intercepting the incoming Japanese formations before they reached the fleet.

An oft-repeated popular myth is that the F2G version of the Corsair was designed in response to kamikaze attacks, but this is untrue. The F2G was in development before the Japanese adopted kamikaze attacks and was expected to serve as an interceptor against conventional air attack. Only a handful of F2Gs were produced, and the order was cancelled as the end of the war drew near.

The Corsair's first encounter with kamikazes did not come off too well, as a formation of nine bomb-carrying Zeros managed to break through the fighter screen over the fleet off of Leyte and attacked the small escort carriers that operated offshore. The most serious damage was to the escort carrier *St. Lo,* which sank. In response to the attacks, the Navy developed tactics to defend against kamikazes by intercepting and shooting them down as far from the fleet as possible. Commander John S. Thach came up with what he called "the big blue blanket," an around-the-clock fighter patrol over the fleet. Corsairs and Hellcats would maintain

station at sea away from the main fleet and carry out airstrikes on Japanese airfields.

Thanks to Thach's tactics, the intense kamikaze attacks off Okinawa caused far less damage than they might have. Although almost 1,500 kamikazes were launched from Kyushu and Formosa, only a small fraction actually reached the fleet. They managed to inflict heavy damage among the destroyers and other small ships maintaining picket duty away from the main fleet, but none of the capital ships or carriers were sunk although several sustained hits.

The effectiveness of the Corsair is illustrated by the battle on April 22, 1945, when Corsair pilots from VMF-323 were part of a formation that attacked a force of 80 kamikazes focusing on picket ships north of Okinawa at dusk. VMF-323 pilots alone downed 23 of the attackers in just a few minutes. Three squadron pilots, including the commander, Major George Axtell, shot down five or more airplanes. The battle was fought under low clouds with showers all around. During their combat tour, Axtell and his men were credited with 124.5 Japanese airplanes shot down, most of them kamikazes.

Marine Corsair squadrons at Okinawa operated both from carriers and from Kadena and Yomitan airfields on the island, once they had been secured. Corsair pilots took off and landed on the two airfields even though Japanese troops still held the southern part of the island. The land-based fighters were primarily responsible for the combat air patrols over the ships since they were not hampered by the limitations of carrier operations.

Corsairs were the first choice for kamikaze interceptions due to their higher speeds and climb performance. Marine fighters were credited with 506 of the some 3,000 Japanese aircraft expended during the battle. Roughly half were kamikazes. Navy fighters and antiaircraft accounted for most of the rest. Less than 10 percent of the kamikaze aircraft managed to actually mount attacks.

In addition to the Corsairs operated by the Navy and Marine Corps, the British Royal Navy and the New Zealand Air Force also took deliveries of new birds straight from the factories. The first Royal Navy Corsairs were delivered in November 1943. Royal Navy pilots were sent to the United States to train in the new airplanes, then were sent to the fleet. Although they were plagued with the same problems as the U.S. Navy in regard to carrier operations, the British squadrons operated off carriers from the beginning.

The demand for Corsairs led United Aircraft to license Brewster Aircraft and Goodyear to build the airplanes, including many of the British airplanes. After the initial delivery of 95, British Corsairs were delivered with eight inches clipped off the wings to allow easier storage aboard carriers.

British Corsairs flew their first combat missions in April 1944 in support of a Royal Navy strike against the German battleship *Tirpitz,* which was cloistered in a Norwegian fjord. A few days after the Corsair involvement in attacks on the *Tirpitz,* Royal Navy Corsairs went into operation in the Indian Ocean. The Royal Navy equipped 13 of its squadrons with Corsairs, a total of 225 airplanes. British Corsairs operated off Royal Navy carriers in the Pacific during the final months of the war, participating in air strikes in bypassed areas of the Southwest Pacific as well as Okinawa and Japan itself. Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, a Canadian flying with the Royal Navy, was awarded the Victoria Cross for attacking and sinking a Japanese destroyer off Honshu on August 9, 1945.

New Zealand received more than 400 Corsairs, and the first squadron became operational in May 1944 on Espiritu Santo. With Rabaul bypassed, the war was moving north, and the Kiwi Corsair squadrons were assigned primarily to ground-attack missions against isolated Japanese positions on islands that had been bypassed.

The other primary user of the Corsair was France, although the French did not begin operating the Vought fighters until after World War II had come to an end. After receiving a number of former U.S. Marine Corsairs that had fought in Korea, France contracted with Chance-Vought for 94 new planes, and the assembly lines were reopened and production continued from 1952 to 1953. Consequently, the Corsair had the longest production history of any U.S. reciprocating engine fighter.

While the Corsair is sometimes depicted as the finest Allied fighter of the war, its record is actually mixed. U.S. Marine and Navy Corsair pilots were credited with shooting down 2,140 Japanese planes with a kill-loss ratio of 11 to 1, the lowest loss rate of any fighter of the Pacific War. But the statistics are misleading. The air-to-air role of the Corsair was primarily in the Solomons and Rabaul campaigns, and once the war moved farther north, Corsair squadrons saw less opportunity for air-to-air combat and less exposure to attack by Japanese aircraft.

Most of the leading Corsair aces racked up their scores from August 1942 after the invasion of Guadalcanal to January 1944 when the skies over Rabaul were secured. After that, Corsair operations were primarily in the ground-attack role except for the few weeks in December 1944 during the battle for Leyte. Marine Corsair squadrons were heavily involved in defending the fleet against kamikaze attacks, but the suicide pilots were not trained for air-to-air combat.

Other fighter types—particularly Navy and Marine F6Fs and Army P-38s and P-47s—saw considerably more air-to-air combat than the F4Us during the last 18 months of the war. The accident rate for the Corsair was deplorable. Only 189 F4Us were lost in air-to-air combat, while 349 fell to ground fire, but 692 were lost in nonoperational accidents. Operational losses (accidents during combat) claimed 230 of the bent-wing birds.

The Corsair was the only World War II operational fighter that continued in production after the war ended. While production of Grumman F6Fs ceased, Corsair production continued into the 1950s as F4Us remained in Navy and Marine service, primarily in the ground-attack role. The Navy also used Corsairs in the night-fighter role, and Navy Lieutenant Guy Bordelon achieved ace status by shooting down five enemy planes, making him the only Navy ace of the Korean War as well as the only ace of the war to make all of his kills in a propeller airplane. He was most likely the last propeller ace in history.

One Corsair pilot was credited with bringing down a Japanese plane by chopping off its tail with his propeller. Marine Lieutenant R.R. Klingman was attempting to intercept a twin-engine Japanese bomber at high altitude off Okinawa when his guns iced up due to the extreme cold and would not fire. Not willing to let the enemy plane escape and perhaps dive into the side of a ship, Klingman pulled up behind the bomber and let his propeller eat into its tail.

The tail came off, and the bomber spun to earth out of control. Although he lost five inches of his propeller, Klingman managed to land safely and was awarded the Navy Cross for the mission. It was not the first time a Corsair brought down an enemy plane by direct contact. The first Japanese plane brought down by a Corsair was the result of a midair collision.

Corsairs continued in military service with several countries through the 1950s and 1960s, although the U.S. Navy retired the type after the Korean War. French Corsairs flew in Indochina and Algeria. The last combat use of Corsairs was in 1969 during a conflict between El Salvador and Honduras, both of which operated the type. □

Frequent contributor Sam McGowan is himself a licensed pilot. He resides in Missouri City, Texas.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Two-State Illusion

Would it solve the Middle East problem?

There seems to be almost universal consensus that in order to bring peace to the Middle East the creation of a Palestinian state is unavoidable. What is more, such a "solution" is the policy of the United States.

What are the facts?

The lesson of Gaza. In previous *hasbarah* (educating and clarifying) messages we made clear that a Palestinian state would be impossible for Israel to accept. It would lead inevitably to Israel's destruction. The reason is primarily the lesson learned from the Gaza experiment. Under pressure from most of the world, Israel evacuated Gaza, displacing hundreds of families who had lived there for generations and who had built substantial communities and extensive agricultural installations. Instead of making even the least gesture of acknowledgment and gratitude, the Palestinians, almost from the very first day of their "liberation" from the hated Jews, began to lob rockets into Israel. Ultimately, Israel was forced to defend itself against those attacks and invaded Gaza in force. There was much damage and many casualties. As could be expected, "world opinion" condemned Israel's defensive action and called it "disproportionate."

> "...the ultimate goal is not... a Palestinian state... but the destruction of Israel."

If Israel were foolish enough to yield to the unrelenting pressure and were to turn Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") over to the Palestinians, it would find itself surrounded by enemies, whose ultimate goal is not the creation of a Palestinian state but the destruction of Israel – to use the common rhetoric, to wipe Israel off the map and push the Jews into the sea.

Statehood opportunities rejected. The reality is that the Palestinians are not really interested in their own independent state. Such a state never existed and the concept of a "Palestinian" people is a fairly new one. If the Palestinians were really interested in their own state, if that were their aspiration, they could have had such a state side-by-side with Israel, for a very long time. The first partition of Palestine – all of which, by the Balfour Declaration and by the mandate of the League of Nations was to be the Jewish home – occurred in 1921. Winston Churchill, who was then the Colonial Secretary, split the mandated territory, allocating the great bulk to the Arabs for the creation of what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. But, of course, that did not satisfy the Arabs. After much bloody fighting over the decades, other efforts were made to create an additional state for the Arabs (who by then called themselves "Palestinians"). There was the Peel Partition Plan of 1937, and, most importantly perhaps, the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947. Under the UN plan, the territory west of the Jordan River was to be split, with the major portion to be allocated to the Arabs and the smaller, disconnected, portion going to the Jews. Jerusalem, a bone of contention, was to be "internationalized" – it would not belong to either. The Jews, anxious to form their state, accepted this plan under which they were granted only a small fraction of the "Palestine" that they had been promised to be their homeland by the Balfour Declaration and by the mandate of the League of Nations. But the Arabs rejected the partition out of hand. Almost the same day that Israel declared its statehood and its independence, six Arab armies invaded Israel from north, east and south. In what could be called a Biblical miracle, the ragtag Jewish forces defeated the combined Arab might.

Following the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israeli forces defeated the combined invasion forces of Egypt and Syria, Israel offered generous terms for the formation of a Palestinian state. But it was not accepted. Instead, the Arabs convened in Khartoum (Sudan) and pronounced their famous Three No's: No peace with Israel, No negotiations with Israel, No recognition of Israel. Other offers of statehood were made over the course of the years. Ehud Barak, then prime minister of Israel, and U.S. President Bill Clinton offered the Palestinians almost total withdrawal to the 1967 armistice lines. The Palestinians rejected the offer, presumably because it did not include Israel's willingness to accept hundreds of thousands of Palestinian "refugees," who would with one stroke accomplish what the Arabs had not accomplished in their wars: the destruction of Israel. The creation of a Palestinian state could have been accomplished many times. But it is the unalterable goal of the Palestinians, indeed of most Arabs and most Muslims, to destroy the Jewish state and never to recognize and legitimize Israel in whatever shape and size as a Jewish state.

It is important to understand that the creation of a Palestinian state is not the true ultimate goal of the Arabs. It is, at best, meant to be a stepping stone toward the ultimate goal: the destruction, the disappearance of Israel and of the hated Jews from any portion of what they consider "holy Muslim soil." The Arabs are not interested in putting an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. That could have been accomplished long ago. On the contrary, to be martyrs is a source of pride and assurance of victory to the Arabs. They compare their willingness to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of their own with the Zionist enemy, who is concerned about combat losses or even the fate of one single abducted soldier.

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By Ken Parker

National Archives

Bastogne's Bedsheets

Lieutenant Colonel John Hanlon repaid the kindness of the people of the embattled Belgian town.

MANY PEOPLE WHO NEVER KNEW JOHN HANLON PERSONALLY MAY REMEMBER him as that paratrooper who took the sheets back to Bastogne. His act of gratitude received national media coverage. The story of the sheets began during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. Hanlon was a major in the 101st Airborne Division, commanding the 1st Battalion, 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Brought to Bastogne in southeast Belgium by trucks because of the poor weather, the 101st was assigned to hold that area. Soon surrounded, they were prime targets in their khaki overcoats against the snow. Villagers gave Hanlon their white bedsheets to cover his men, making them less visible to the enemy. By the time the 101st was relieved by elements of General George S. Patton Jr.'s Third Army, the sheets were in tatters, having been caught on branches, jeeps, and rifles, and many showed bullet holes.

When the 101st Airborne left Bastogne, Hanlon decided that if he made it home, he would collect sheets from residents of his hometown, Winchester, Massachusetts, a few miles north of Boston, and deliver them personally to the villagers.

In November 1947, John began collecting sheets. By the time he had finished, he had collected 740. He flew to Bastogne with them in February 1948. His trip received national headlines, including a major story in the March 15, 1948, issue of *Life* magazine. When Hanlon arrived in Bastogne, the village was festooned with large colorful posters of gratitude. He was made an honorary citizen of Belgium, and the people of Bastogne sent Stations of the Cross to every church in Winchester, regardless of denomination.

John's widow, Joan, has one of the posters and a copy of the *Life* magazine with John's story. She lives in the 1780 cedar-shingled house she and John bought in 1962 at 101 Hoyt Avenue, in the Rumford section of East Providence, Rhode Island. John and Joan met in 1950 on the island of Nantucket, where each had gone for vacation. They were married on June 9, 1951, in her hometown of Cranford, New Jersey.

John took Joan to Belgium in 1957 to show her where he had served—and where he had returned the sheets. Walking down a street, they encountered a postman on a bicycle. He recognized Hanlon, stopped, and saluted him. Then, he took them to a house where Joan was taken upstairs and shown John in a photo hanging above a bed. He was the village hero. Presumably, this housewife had at least one of the sheets, maybe a pair.

The Army also saluted Hanlon's "gallantry in action" in the Bastogne area. In a general order dated January 10, 1945, he was awarded the Silver Star. Hanlon was later promoted to lieutenant colonel, becoming commander of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. At age 27, Hanlon was the youngest lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army at that time, according to his widow.

"Did you ever kill a man?" John asked the author once at the *Providence* (R.I.) *Journal*, where we both worked in 1947. "No," I said, "did you?"

"One that I know of. He was coming around the other side of a barn," John shrugged, apologetically. "I fired first."

Hanlon also told this writer of being wounded and being sent back to England to recuperate. "When I was OK, they sent me back to my unit. Believe me, I didn't want to go back. It was awful."

ABOVE: Lieutenant Colonel John Hanlon repaid the kindness of the people of Bastogne by returning to the town with a supply of bedsheets. TOP: Wearing part of a sheet as camouflage, an American soldier mans a Browning .30-caliber machine gun on the outskirts of the embattled town of Bastogne.

John was wounded during Operation Market Garden, the airborne campaign in Holland in September 1944. He and an Army doctor were taking a breather on the edge of a foxhole when he was shot in the back by a sniper. Even before calling for help in getting John to an aid station, the doctor said, "Move your feet," to determine if Hanlon had been paralyzed. He had not, and John received the Purple Heart for the wound.

At the *Providence Journal*, Hanlon became a sports columnist, then a writer of a popular

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Photo courtesy of Joan Hanlon

ABOVE: Conferring with other officers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division near Bastogne, John Hanlon, then holding the rank of major, kneels in the snow at right to survey a map. RIGHT: With his Great Dane, Lancelot, ROTC Cadet John Hanlon poses in 1939, during his days on the campus of the University of New Hampshire.

general column. Until his retirement in 1982, he also wrote magazine articles and Sunday feature stories. A year after he retired, the *Journal* published a book of selected Hanlon material. In 1991, he was inducted into the Rhode Island Journalism Hall of Fame.

John Hanlon died of cancer on April 14, 1996. He was 78 years old. His obituary in the *Providence Journal* recalled that he "captured life in Rhode Island with grace and honesty for 23 years ..."

Joan Hanlon is an active professional portrait painter. Her mother was also a portrait painter, and her father was an illustrator for books, magazines, and newspapers. Mrs. Hanlon did a strikingly accurate portrait of John that hangs on the wall of a room devoted to pictures she has also painted of other relatives. She said she painted the portrait of John from photographs the year after he died.

In their first combat operation, the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division were to jump behind enemy lines in the predawn darkness of D-Day. German antiaircraft gunners started shooting at them, and, while the pilots were zigzagging to avoid being hit, some became disoriented and started to fly in the wrong direction.

The German fire lit the dark night enough that Hanlon could see quite well through the pilot's windshield. Standing at the door, ready to lead his men in the jump, he saw the heavily laden troopers in the plane ahead jump over water; they never came up. He told the pilot right then, "Light the green light; we're going right now," and he and his men jumped.

Many service people were loath to recount their experiences, but Hanlon seemed compelled to do so. Apparently, talking about the war was a therapy for him. His oral war stories were augmented by his writings as a *Providence Journal* columnist.

Excerpts from a column he wrote on January 17, 1991, reveal how he felt the day before he jumped into Normandy. "Before the battle, the young soldier sits alone in his tent…. Within hours he knows he will fire his first shot in anger and certainly get the same in return. His mind is muddled—by fear, by not knowing what to expect, by wondering how he will stand up to his first taste of combat.

"Fear is the worst. It is a big knot in his stomach. It comes in huge waves and engulfs him, thinking that these might be the last hours of his life. The young soldier is not ready for that. Then it wanes, and he feels some comfort in his training for this moment….

"But he also remembers an aging American officer back in the States, a veteran of an earlier war, the young soldier believes, telling them: 'When you first take your men into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, they will look up to you with pathetic eagerness for leadership, and you'd better be ready….'

"It is late afternoon now, and the young soldier knows that the chaplain is holding the last service for his flock before the time comes. The young soldier, only mildly religious, thinks about going, then changes his mind.

"Instead, before any of his tentmates return, he kneels by his bunk and, speaking almost to himself, tells God why he bypassed the padre's service.

"He says he is not at the service because he is not a churchgoer, and at this late stage of the game it would be hypocritical of him to ask to be spared.

"So instead, he is on his knees to seek the will to do his part properly and bravely, to curb that fear that was so strong in him. He asks: Is that being a hypocrite?

"He looks outside the tent to the company street and sees a group of men just standing there smoking and talking. He wonders. Are they troubled by the thoughts that are troubling him? Would they be looking with pathetic eagerness, and is he ready? He will find out soon."

Photo courtesy of Joan Hanlon

In an earlier column, published on June 8, 1964, in observance of the 20th anniversary of D-Day, Hanlon wrote of crickets and motion sickness pills. Crickets were little metal prizes found in Cracker Jack boxes. They did not chirp, but when squeezed, they made a clicking sound. The Army used them as identification signals during the D-Day operation.

If a GI heard a sound in the dark or on the other side of a hedgerow, he clicked once. The friendly response was two clicks. If there was no response, the GI fired. The idea was, of course, to help prevent Americans from shooting each other and, conversely, not to be jumped by a German.

Hanlon's column explained, "With each cricket came a length of string. The string was inserted through a hole in the cricket, fastened and worn around the neck…

"My landing was quite easy, seemingly about in the middle of a small field. I got out of the gear (his parachute) and headed for the cover of a hedgerow.

"I had gone about 10 yards when I heard the definite sound of one click of a cricket coming from the bushes. I flopped down and not without some urgency, reached inside my shirt, in the

vicinity of the breastbone, to get the cricket. My cricket was not there. I hastily continued probing, then felt that the string was tight up against my throat. Somehow my cricket had become turned around and was hanging down my back.

"Meanwhile, the man in the bushes had given another click of his cricket and undoubtedly was getting impatient. I clutched at the string, pulled the cricket up and out, and finally gave the two answering clicks. I went over the bushes and found my challenger. He was one of the company cooks."

Joan Hanlon says that the way he described the incident to her was much more dramatic than the way he wrote about it. She said he told her he scratched his neck clawing for the cricket and was soaked with sweat by the time he found it.

Concerning the motion-sickness pills, Hanlon wrote, "These, we were told, were something new and might cause drowsiness. But they would prevent air sickness during the three-hour process of getting all the planes airborne, assembled and off to France. Each of us was issued two pills and given strict orders that they be taken shortly before takeoff.

"For me, this presented a problem. On the one hand, I was obliged to obey the instructions; on the other, I knew my reaction to pills of any sort that can cause drowsiness. That is, I am not a pill-taker by nature, then or now, and as a result have very little tolerance for them. A half an aspirin, for instance, hits me like a bomb.

"Still, orders were orders. When we were lined up by our plane and the command came to take pills, I was in no position to renege. I took both of them.

"The first flush of excitement (sometimes spelled f-e-a-r) served to ward off any reaction for 30 minutes or so, while the plane was en route to the assembly point. But when we got there and settled into the lazy drone of waiting for the others to join up, I began to feel drowsy.

"I thought I was fighting the pills, but once I was surprised to notice that about 15 unremembered minutes had elapsed between looks at my watch. Another time, the man next to me poked me in the ribs and said I was snoring. At the appointed hour over Normandy, of course, there was no problem staying awake."

In that same column, Hanlon wrote that some time after the landing, when a couple of hundred troopers had been assembled, a senior officer was leading them down a road, with Hanlon's group near the rear.

At the sound of firing ahead, the rear guard was told to stay put and take cover. He remembered, "We went into a ditch and sat down, and I knew that would be a disaster for me and my

Photo courtesy of Joan Hanlon

ABOVE: Joan Hanlon, John's widow, displays a welcoming banner that was produced by the people of Bastogne to commemorate his postwar visit. BELOW: Makeshift camouflage provided by bedsheets is shown on this American half-track on the outskirts of Bastogne in December 1944.

National Archives

pills. It was. Within minutes, in my first introduction to battle, I was sound asleep.

"I don't know how long I took my ease, but when someone shook me awake and said we were ready to move out, I felt fine. I must have slept just long enough to nullify the pills and had no further problems in that category.

"But I've thought a lot about that snooze. Suppose, I imagine, the column had moved out and left me, and then some high-ranker had come along and found me asleep on the battlefield? What then?

"I suppose I could have gone before the court-martial and said, 'Sir, it was those darn pills.' But I don't think anyone would have believed me."

Joan Hanlon owns a silver mug, four or five inches high, about two inches in diameter at the bottom and slightly smaller at the top. It is one of several that General Maxwell Taylor, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, reportedly liberated from the headquarters of Hermann Göring, chief of the German Luftwaffe.

Taylor had them engraved and gave one to each of his commanders. On the one that Mrs. Hanlon has is inscribed: "101st Airborne Division, 1944-1945, Lt. Col. J. D. Hanlon, 502nd Parachute Infantry." At the bottom, engraved around the mug are, "Normandy, Holland, Bastogne, Central Europe."

While still a teenage high school student, Hanlon had applied for admission to the University of New Hampshire (UNH) in Durham. UNH happened to have a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program. Accepted by UNH, he began his freshman year in September 1936.

While at UNH, Hanlon was given a Great Dane pup he named Sir Lancelot. He had also applied for and been accepted in the ROTC, and he took the dog to ROTC training sessions. Unfortunately, during the dress parade ceremony celebrating ROTC graduation, Sir Lancelot was struck by a jeep and died. Membership in ROTC paid for John's tuition, in return for which, upon graduation, he was obliged to serve four years in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Besides the financial incentive, Hanlon was obviously military oriented, as shown by his graduation in June 1940 as the top ROTC graduate at UNH. Hanlon was an admirer of Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., a decorated hero of World War I, and used his graduation standing to request assignment to Roosevelt's Army Reserve unit.

In 1942, Hanlon learned that paratrooper cadets were being offered $50 a month over their current military salary as a recruiting incentive, and he transferred to the Regular Army so he could apply. When he transferred, Hanlon was assigned to Fort Devens, an Army reception center in Ayer, Massachusetts, where he applied for the paratroopers and was accepted. While Hanlon was awaiting assignment to the next jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia, a plane crashed in nearby Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Devens personnel were sent to the crash site for rescue work.

The plane had burned, however, and everyone aboard with it. Years later, Hanlon told his wife that the burned bodies smelled like lamb cooking, and he never ate lamb afterward. When he graduated from parachute training, Hanlon was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. His illustrious career with the 101st is history, and in 2002 the UNH ROTC program inducted John D. Hanlon into its Hall of Fame. □

First-time contributor Ken Parker resides in Barrington, Rhode Island.

By John Brown

Imperial War Museum

Popski's Private Army

Vladimir Peniakoff harried the Germans and Italians at every opportunity.

IN SEPTEMBER 1942, TWO PATROLS OF ARMED JEEPS AND TRUCKS OF THE LONG Range Desert Group (LRDG) raided the German airfield at Barce. Between Benghazi and Derna in Libya, Barce was 550 miles behind the El Alamein line where German General Erwin Rommel's Panzer Army Afrika was shaping up for a battle with British General Bernard Law Montgomery's Eighth Army.

German and Italian planes were assisting Rommel and bombing the island bastion of Malta in the Mediterranean. In the sharp, short raid, the LRDG patrols set 24 planes on fire, damaged another 12 with bombs and machine-gun fire, and destroyed 10 trucks and a fuel tanker and trailer. An unknown number of German and Italian soldiers and airmen were killed or wounded.

It was just a pinprick for the Axis forces, but with other raids by the LRDG and SAS (Special Air Service) deep in Axis-held territory it forced the Germans and Italians to beef up their rear-area security when Rommel needed all the troops he could find for the Alamein front.

With the raiders at Barce was an observer and guide, Major Vladimir Peniakoff. In the raid he had a finger smashed by a bullet; the finger was amputated next day in the desert and at the same time some shell splinters were taken from one of his legs. However, he said, he "enjoyed himself thoroughly" and was determined to have his own independent unit operating along the lines of the LRDG and SAS.

Vladimir Peniakoff was born in Belgium in 1897 of wealthy émigré Russian parents. He was a brilliant student and began studying engineering, physics, and mathematics at the University of Brussels at age 15. When Germany invaded Belgium in 1914, he was sent to England where he continued his studies at Cambridge University, but not for long. He went to France and worked in a factory until accepted for the French Army in which he saw some action with the artillery and was wounded. When World War I ended, he returned to Belgium to manage his father's chemical factory for research and production of aluminum.

In 1924, unhappy with life in Belgium, Vladimir took a job as an engineer with a large, French-owned sugar company in Egypt, and for the next 15 years he filled various posts within the company in Cairo and in Upper Egypt. In his spare time and on holidays he made expeditions into the desert in a Model A Ford, where he made friends with Arabs he met, learned to navigate in the wilderness, and learned something of desert lore. In 1928 he married a Belgian woman, Josette Ceysens; they had two daughters and divorced in 1942.

When World War II began in 1939, Peniakoff was 42 years old, a square, powerfully built man of complex character, moody, explo-

Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Peniakoff, known as Popski, sits behind the wheel of a jeep with his gunner, Corporal Ron Cokes, at the University of Padua in Italy in May 1945. Note that Popski utilizes a hook after losing his left hand in combat.

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ABOVE: The fighting men of Popski's Private Army were experts in hit-and-run tactics. One of their camps is shown in Italy late in the war as preparations are made for the departure of a patrol.
RIGHT: Captain Jean Caneri, one of Popski's first recruits, served as the second in command for the irregular combat unit. In Popski's absence, Caneri led the PPA in patrol and fighting operations.

sive, intolerant, loyal, a man of many contrasts. He was, one LRDG officer said, "often muddle-headed" and "had become very Arab in his ways, particularly in relation to time." He was a great admirer of the British way of life and immediately volunteered for the British Army. As Belgium was still neutral and he was Belgian, he was not accepted. But when Belgium was invaded, he was accepted and commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the general list, probably the oldest 2nd lieutenant in the British Army.

By a mix of bluff, persistence, and some lies, he got himself appointed a company commander in the Libyan Arab Force. With it he saw some action around Tobruk, and in May 1942 he was given command, as a major, of a detachment to be known as the Libyan Arab Force Commando.

It was a small unit of 22 Senussi Arabs, a British sergeant, and an Arab officer—an independent command—and it had no transport. For that and his supplies, he had to rely on the LRDG. For five months he operated behind the Axis lines in the Jebel Akhdar, the lushly forested and mountainous area between Benghazi and Derna in Libya, keeping a road watch and reporting Axis traffic along the coast, rescuing shot-down airmen, and ambushing when he could.

In one action, Peniakoff destroyed a large, 450,000-gallon fuel dump. Then, with Rommel nearing the gates of Alexandria, the LRDG was pulled back from its forward base at Siwa and with it Peniakoff and his Commando. The Commando was disbanded in a reorganization of the Libyan Arab Force, and Peniakoff went to see Colonel Shan Hackett in Cairo.

Hackett controlled all special forces in the Middle East. He had read a report on irregular warfare that Peniakoff had written and knew of his work in the Jebel Akhdar—and he was a very perceptive man. He suggested that as Peniakoff knew the area very well he should accompany an LRDG raid scheduled on the airfield at Barce, and while Peniakoff was away he would think of something for him to do.

After the raid on Barce and after a few days in the hospital, Peniakoff went to see Hackett. Hackett authorized him to set up a small, motorized unit to go behind enemy lines to find and destroy fuel dumps, aircraft, and transport. The unit would have an establishment of one major—Peniakoff—a captain, three lieutenants, and 18 other ranks. It would have six vehicles and would be called No. 1 Demolition Squadron; it would be the smallest independent unit in the British Army.

Peniakoff was not satisfied with the title of the unit, and Hackett suggested "Popski's Private Army (PPA)." Popski was the name given to Peniakoff by the LRDG New Zealanders when they found Peniakoff too much of a problem in radio transmission. Peniakoff agreed, had some "PPA" shoulder flashes made and some cap badges in the form of a 16th-century Italian astrolabe, and went off to find recruits, vehicles, weapons, and equipment.

Popski's first recruits were old comrades from the Libyan Arab Force: a Scot, Captain Bob Park Yunnie, and a French lieutenant, Jean Caneri, who would be released from his duties with the force when possible. He filched a Sergeant Major Waterson from the King's Dragoon Guards (an armored car regiment), a ferocious looking one-eyed Corporal Locke from the LRDG, a young surveyor named Petrie from a survey unit, and several drivers from the Royal Army Service Corps.

When it left Cairo in October 1943, Popski's Private Army consisted of Popski, Captain Bob Yunnie, 12 other ranks, and three Arab soldiers from the Libyan Arab Force. They drove out in four jeeps armed with twin Vickers .303

machine guns and two three-ton trucks loaded with 11 days' rations, more than a ton of explosives, and fuel for 1,500 miles. They headed for the LRDG's base at Kufra.

After the inevitable breakdowns and other delays normal in desert travel and getting lost in the Great Sand Sea, when PPA reached Kufra they found that Montgomery's Eighth Army had already pushed Rommel back to Tripolitania (i.e., western Libya, out of Cyrenaica and the Jebel Akhdar in eastern Libya). Popski decided he must move to Tunisia to get behind Rommel's lines.

He knew, however, that Tunisia would be a very different battleground from the Jebel Akhdar. Travel without being spotted would be much more difficult, and enemy airfields, fuel dumps, and convoys would be much better protected. Popski's men needed more training, and for this he took them to the LRDG's base at Zella. At Zella, Lieutenant Jean Caneri joined him. Caneri, a lawyer before the war, took charge of PPA's administrative affairs and proved a great asset.

Training with the LRDG was "on the job." On one occasion Popski took his men out with a patrol of the LRDG to find a route by which Montgomery's armor could outflank the Mareth Line. They did find a route, but while Popski and three jeeps were away from his base camp on reconnaissance, the camp was betrayed by Bedouin and attacked by German Messerschmitt fighters. All vehicles and stores

were destroyed, and two New Zealanders of the LRDG were badly wounded.

The only transport vehicles left were the three jeeps that had been away from the camp. Popski rushed them off with the wounded to Tozeur, 200 miles away through enemy territory, while the others walked. They had almost reached Tozeur when they were picked up by Henry's Patrol of the LRDG and taken to Tozeur.

From there, Popski took his men to Tebessa, Algeria, where he persuaded the American II Corps to issue them rations and clothing. While they were at Tebessa, publicity was given to their journey through the dangerous gap between the German and American armies, and Popski seized the opportunity to get PPA transferred from the British Eighth Army to the British First Army.

From the American area, he led his men on raids against the Axis forces north and west of the Mareth Line. In jeeps, each armed with a .30-caliber and .50-caliber Browning machine gun, they raided airfields and shot up aircraft, ambushed convoys, and did as much damage as they could until the war in North Africa ended. They accounted for many vehicles, aircraft, and supplies and sundry other items including 600 Italian prisoners. Of more importance was the confusion the tiny force caused the Germans and Italians.

During the four months prior to the invasion of Italy, Popski recruited more men from various units. He had everyone undergo training with the SAS. His standards were exacting. While discipline within PPA was loose—officers and men lived together and shared everything, saluting was optional, the word "sir" was rarely heard, the men wore whatever pieces of uniform or civilian clothing they preferred, provided they didn't include any items of enemy uniform, and Peniakoff was "Popski" to everyone—he demanded resourceful, fighting men. Any man who did not come up to, or fell below, his standards was sent back to the unit he came from. Not that there were many; Popski had an uncanny ability to pick the right kind of man for his kind of war.

The majority of volunteers for PPA were rejected at interview. Popski picked men who were well trained in all the basic military skills, were good cross-country drivers, and above all were resourceful and showed initiative. Once accepted, a recruit underwent a grueling training program that included navigation, signals, and demolition.

For the invasion of Italy, PPA was attached to the British 1st Airborne Division, and Popski had his men trained to take their jeeps and equipment in by gliders. But then the 1st Air-

ABOVE: Mounted aboard jeeps in classic style, a patrol of Popski's Private Army moves across an Austrian meadow in September 1945. After the war officially ended, it remained necessary to keep perimeters secure and maintain order and discipline among the military and civilian populations.

borne Division was sent in by sea to the port of Taranto on the heel of the boot of Italy, and Popski and a patrol of five jeeps landed with the advance elements of the division on September 9, 1943.

Italy had signed an armistice with the Allies two days before the landing, and although the landing was unopposed the military and political situation ashore was very confused. The Germans, considering the Italians traitors, were occupying more Italian territory, and information on German strength and activity in the Taranto area was urgently needed. While the 1st Airborne set up a defense perimeter around the port, Popski took his jeeps off to find answers and locate possible landing grounds for the Royal Air Force between Taranto and Brindisi.

Popski was back 30 hours later to report that the Italian armed forces in the area were either friendly or apathetic, and although they would not take up arms against their former German comrades, they would do nothing to hamper Allied forces. He had all the information the RAF needed about landing areas, which he had obtained from Italian Air Force officers. He had not seen any Germans and could get no information on them.

The task of the 1st Airborne at Taranto was to ease pressure on the American Fifth Army at Salerno, but before leaving Taranto the lightly armed airborne troops, without air, armor, or artillery support, needed to know enemy positions and strength.

Popski drove to Bari where he found a very jittery Italian corps commander worrying about how he would deploy his three divisions should the Germans attack the town. Reassuring the general as best he could, he left for the Gravina-Altamura-Gioia del Colle area where, he was told, he would find the elite German 1st Parachute Division.

During the night, they crossed the main supply route between Spinazzola and Gravina and almost blundered into a German convoy on the road. They drove on into the hill country of the Murge. Here the patrol split up to watch the roads and report all movements to 1st Airborne headquarters. While this was going on, Popski pulled off a coup.

He spoke adequate Italian, and in a friendly chat with an Italian farmer he learned that the farmer provided foodstuffs for the officers mess of the German garrison at Gravina. From a workable telephone at a railway station, he called the German quartermaster, a Major Schulz, and, posing as a loyal quartermaster of an Italian garrison that was being evacuated, asked the major if he would like to buy eight cases of good cognac for the mess. They haggled over the price and came to an agreement and, at Popski's request, the major gave orders to the guards to admit two people in a captured American vehicle that night.

At 11 PM, in a jeep from which all military fittings had been removed, Popski and his driver, Jock Cameron, arrived at the major's office carrying boxes of stones. Popski slugged the major with a cosh, and then they went through his papers. They found a copy of the complete strength, dated the previous day, of the 1st Parachute Division and all other troops in the area who were supplied by the Gravina distribution center. It included the locations of all units. He radioed the information to 1st Airborne.

The road watch figures and other intelligence PPA had supplied during the past few days made it clear the Germans did not have a large number of troops in the area. They deduced that when 1st Airborne, which was now being reinforced, advanced from the Taranto area, the Germans would fall back. This proved to be the case.

Considering his work with 1st Airborne now finished, Popski led his jeeps north behind the German lines looking for whatever damage he could do. During the next few weeks in the Foggia-Bovino area, PPA could do little more than keep a watch on roads, count traffic, try to identify the units the vehicles came from, and blow wheels off German trucks and tracks off armored vehicles with explosive gadgets invented and supplied by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). But their presence alone caused some confusion.

One day, while they were hiding in a grove of trees awaiting dark, two shabbily dressed men approached. They were obviously not Italian peasants, and when Popski stopped them he found they were Russian soldiers captured at Smolensk and sent to work in the Todt Organization, Germany's labor establishment, in northern Italy. From there they had escaped and made their way south. Popski enrolled them in PPA, and they served with distinction for the rest of the war.

At the end of September, the remainder of PPA arrived with the buildup of Allied forces. Popski sent Captain Bob Yunnie with 10 men and four jeeps to reconnoiter the hills and valleys of the Gargano Peninsula, where it was thought there might be a large number of Germans. On the peninsula, Yunnie learned from villagers that the Germans had just left. He transmitted the information to the 4th Armored Brigade and pursued the Germans, across the mountains and down to the coast where, in late afternoon, they caught up with German sappers laying mines in a ford across the River Fortore. They attacked immediately, driving the sappers into the hills, then crossed the ford. But across the river they ran into heavy opposition and barely escaped destruction by mortars as they retired.

They spent the next three days keeping the ford open, chasing away any Germans who came close; nights were spent at the Castle Ripalta whose chatelaine was a lovely English girl married into the Parlato family. When British armor arrived in the area, they led the tanks and armored vehicles across the ford and into Serracapriola.

Meanwhile, Popski and the rest of PPA were on reconnaissance 125 miles behind the front line in the Alban Hills southeast of Rome. They had traveled via Cassino and north along Route 6 to reach the hills but found no Germans there. They drove around the outskirts of Rome and then returned to base. Except for bringing back information on the whereabouts of the 16th Panzer Division and disabling a few of its vehicles, the reconnaissance had accomplished little.

By the end of November, the German line

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was stabilizing across the breadth of Italy, and Popski and Yunnie were unable to find gaps through which they could pass their jeeps. But they carried out some sorties and had a few brushes with German units. During one of these, near the town of Alberona, they found the South African General Hendrik Klopper wandering about; he had been captured at Tobruk and had recently escaped.

Back at base at Lucera and worried about the effect inactivity was having on his men and that there was no future for PPA, Popski went to see the chief of staff at Eighth Army headquarters. He was reassured about the future and told to rest his men farther back at Bisceglie while a new, more orthodox role and larger establishment was worked out for him.

The new establishment allowed for six officers (one major, two captains, and three lieutenants) and 74 other ranks, including wireless operators, armorers, and mechanics. Sufficient armed jeeps and trucks would be provided. With his expanded establishment, Popski planned three operational patrols of six jeeps, each patrol to comprise an officer, a sergeant, two corporals, a mechanic, wireless operator, and six driver-gunners. There would also be a small headquarters patrol, a workshop and wireless section, and an administrative section under Jean Caneri.

Popski went off recruiting, looking for men who were, or would soon be with training, expert in navigation; as drivers, machine gunners, mechanics; and in demolitions. Time was short for training, for Popski had been warned that PPA would take part in the landing at Anzio, so the newcomers were kept at it day and night in the snow-covered mountains. But at the last minute PPA's participation in the Anzio landing was cancelled. It was a bitter blow.

Soon afterward, Popski was asked to send a patrol to destroy a bridge over the River Capa d'Acqua in front of a position held by a Guards brigade on the Garigliano Front. Popski sent part of Bob Yunnie's patrol. Near the river the patrol ran into an uncharted minefield. One man was killed and two seriously wounded by the mines, and the patrol came under heavy German mortar fire in which another man was wounded. Yunnie managed to get the patrol out, but the bridge was not blown.

Popski moved his base to Besceglie at the foot of the Matese mountains and put the men to hard training while he worked on a plan to operate behind the German lines. The operation was to be named Astrolabe.

On June 12, Yunnie and a small advance party including two Royal Navy officers sailed in a Navy P-boat for the mouth of the River Tenna, 60 miles behind the front line. Here Yunnie met agents of "A" Force (M19), who were engaged in rescuing Allied airmen shot down in enemy territory; the agents brought the airmen to the coast and commandos took them out. Yunnie confirmed with the agents and the two Navy officers that an LCT (Landing Craft, Tank) would be able to get in with PPA's jeeps, and he advised Popski of this by radio.

Three nights later, Popski arrived in an LCT with 30 members of PPA, 12 jeeps, and a detachment of 73 commandos of No. 9 Commando who would hold the beachhead while PPA landed and then return with the LCT.

The commandos immediately went ashore and took up positions to cover PPA's landing. Popski went in with them and met Yunnie on the beach. Yunnie reported that, because his message confirming the landing point reconnaissance inland had shown heavy German traffic everywhere, the German Army was now in retreat. He said he did not think PPA had any chance of survival in the crowded enemy situation.

It was a blow for Popski. He did the only thing possible; he cancelled the operation.

The commandos were called in, but when the LCT tried to move it was found she was fast aground. The Navy motor launch came to her assistance, but the LCT could not be moved. Then the motor launch, too, ran aground. Luckily the motor launch got off a sandbar, but there was no moving the LCT.

Popski ordered Yunnie and four of his men to stay ashore to report on the situation by radio, ordered all the rest onto the motor launch and the LCT, and then blew up the jeeps.

As soon as he was able to get replacement jeeps, Popski made his way to the mountain village of Sarnano, 40 miles southwest of Fermo, where Yunnie and his four men met him. They set off in 10 jeeps to the River Chienti, hoping to cross it and get behind the German lines.

When they started to ford the river, Corporal Cameron, Popski's driver and friend, was killed, and Lieutenant Rickwood, in command of a patrol, was accidentally shot in the stomach after the action, by one of his own men carelessly cleaning his gun. Unable to cross the river because of the large number of Germans in the area, Popski pulled back to Sarnano, then crossed a 4,000-foot mountain range to the small town of Bolognola, where he came upon a band of 300 partisans. They were under the dual command of a Major Ferri and his brother Giuseppe, a history professor at the University of Pisa.

Though inexperienced, the partisans were achieving some success with captured German weapons and were delighted to combine with

PPA, to exchange their knowledge of the country for PPA's teaching in ambushing and other guerrilla tactics. For Popski, Bolognola was a good base. It overlooked the upper reaches of the River Chienti and beyond to the walled town of Camerino, which was the headquarters of a German mountain division.

The bridge across the Chienti had been destroyed, and German troops were in strength along the road on the other side. Most nights PPA and the partisans would drive down to the river and shoot up German convoys on the other bank. Soon the Germans pulled back from the river area. PPA crossed the river and drove on to the Potenza River, seven miles beyond Camerino, and blew the bridge over that river.

Strong, well-separated attacks and deception tactics convinced the German commander that large forces were operating all around him, and he withdrew his division across the Potenza. PPA and the partisans marched triumphantly into Camerino.

Popski was by now in command of both the partisans and PPA. He appointed Giuseppi Ferri, the university professor, to be civilian governor of Camerino and his brother, the major, commander of partisans, and stayed in Camerino for several days helping to set up a civilian administration until the arrival of the official Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory (AMGOT). He then led PPA north across the Potenza looking for more action.

One of Popski's lieutenants, Nick Hubbard, mounts a flamethrower atop a PPA jeep.

For the next three months they raided German outposts, destroyed fuel and ammunition dumps, ambushed convoys, and liberated villages. With no more than 50 men at any time, they killed over 300 Germans with the loss of one man killed and three wounded and cleared 1,600 square miles of mountains.

In the middle of September 1944, the Allies broke through the German Gothic Line stretching across Italy from Pesaro on the Adriatic to La Spezia on the Tyrrhenian Sea, but the German divisions commanded by Field Marshal Albert Kesselring retreated very slowly, fighting stubbornly for every river and canal crossing and defensive feature.

In the tangle of waterways along the coast of the Adriatic, Popski found that his jeeps were not able to operate effectively. Somewhere he heard that amphibious DUKW vehicles had arrived in the country, and he quickly acquired some and began training with them at Ancona. He allowed seven DUKWs to a patrol, six to carry armed jeeps and the seventh supplies and a chain-lift crane.

On November 1, he took his DUKWs across the River Savio and met a band of partisans of the Garibaldi Brigade led by Ateo Minghelli. The Garibaldi Brigade was communist, under the command of Arrigo Boldrini, but ready to cooperate with anyone fighting the Germans. Popski attached members of Minghelli's band to each of his patrols.

The arrangement worked well. Throughout the bitter winter they harried the Germans from forest hideouts as part of the 27th Lancers' "Porterforce" and pushed them back whenever the opportunity arose. The DUKWs enabled PPA to negotiate the many waterways of northern Italy, to outflank German positions and, on occasion, to be driven onto LCTs and driven




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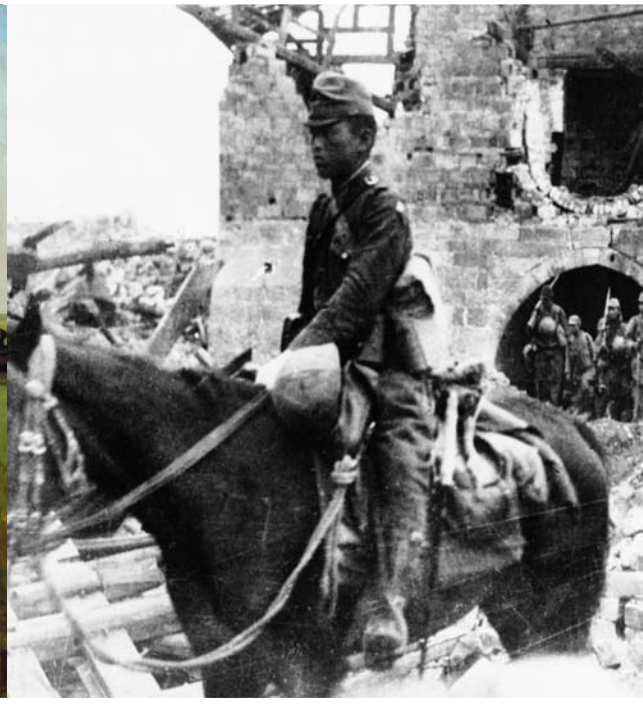

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off on beaches behind German positions.

The six armed jeeps of a patrol had tremendous firepower. Each jeep was armed with a .50-caliber and .30-caliber machine gun and each patrol carried two .303 Bren guns, a bazooka, and a 2-inch mortar. A smoke generator was fixed to the rear of each jeep. A broadside from six jeeps in line was devastating. Personal weapons included Thompson submachine guns, rifles, pistols, and grenades.

Although the risks were great, casualties were few. Replacements were quickly found. One replacement was a Lieutenant John Campbell, of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who took command of "S" patrol and distinguished himself in two daring and spectacular raids, earning himself two Military Crosses and promotion to captain.

In early December, PPA and its partisans were the first to enter Ravenna. Hearing that two troops of the 27th Lancers in a position along a road out of Ravenna were surrounded by Germans and needed help, Popski took a patrol to the scene. Under the covering fire of some tanks, he led his patrol to within 30 yards of two companies of Germans who were dug in on the bank of a canal from where they had the Lancers covered. The jeeps kept up a concentrated fire on the German position, allowing the Lancers to get away. Popski lost his left hand in the action. He was hospitalized, sent to England, and awarded a Distinguished Service Order.

In his absence, Jean Caneri took command of PPA and led it on operations until snow bogged down the jeeps. He then organized training for everyone in parachuting, skiing, and mountain climbing.

In April, Bob Yunnie obtained a compassionate home posting upon the death of his only son, and a recently recruited young lieutenant from the 27th Lancers named McCallum took his place as patrol leader. Patrol leaders were now McCallum, Captain John Campbell, and Lieutenant Steve Wallbridge.

On April 21, Caneri led all PPA, with his headquarters organized as a fighting patrol, into the watery maze around Lake Comacchio where, with the partisans of the Garibaldi Brigade and units of the 27th Lancers, they fought Germans for seven days. McCallum and his gunner were killed when a Panzerfaust antitank weapon destroyed their jeep as McCallum was leading his patrol into a village on the lake.

PPA crossed the rivers Po and Adige and ran into a large force of Germans at Chioggia. Using bluff, as Popski would have done, Caneri laughed off the fact that he had only nine men in three jeeps, saying there were large forces behind him, and persuaded the German commander that to continue fighting was hopeless. The commander surrendered his 700 men.

Two days later, Campbell's patrol charged a battery of 88mm guns and captured it together with 300 troops. Two other patrols sailed across the Gulf of Venice and helped clear the Germans out of Iesolo. In 10 days, while killing and wounding many Germans, they had taken 1,335 prisoners and captured 16 field guns and many other weapons. It was a good haul, and it was PPA's last battle.

Popski rejoined his army at Chioggia wearing a fearsome hook in place of his hand. On some shallow-draft Ramp Cargo Lighters (RCLs) manned by seven Royal Engineers known as "Popski's Private Navy" he took his jeeps up the lagoon to Venice where, "for the

Popski's Private Army Preservation Society and the Friends of Popski's Private Army (FPPA) provided most of the images accompanying this story. The Society collects information about the unit, builds replicas of the vehicles used by Popski's unit, and maintains a unit website: **http://users.telenet.be/ppa/** The FPPA work to honor and preserve the history of Popski and his men.

sheer pleasure of it," he led his jeeps around and around the Piazza San Marco. He then drove up into the Alps, heading for Austria. Near the border town of Tarvisio, he received a radio message telling him that Germany had surrendered. They drove into Austria.

In the 36 months of its existence, 20 of them spent on operations, PPA had been more of a brotherhood than a military unit, a brotherhood created and led by Popski. Though at its peak it numbered no more than about 120 men, its contribution to the war effort was impressive.

In Austria, PPA was disbanded and its members returned to their former units. Popski stayed in Austria, working as the liaison officer between the British and the Russians for that sector until 1946, when he was demobilized. He settled in England and married his second wife Pamela. Popski died in London in May 1951 of a brain tumor—famous from his writing, radio broadcasts, and best-selling book about PPA.

Postscript: On September 14, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the disbandment of PPA, Captain John Campbell CVO CBE MC and Bar led a commemorative visit of 30 PPA veterans, relatives, and friends, including both of Popski's daughters, back to Italy to hold ceremonies of remembrance at PPA graves near Ravenna, with the group generously honored and hosted by the mayors of Ravenna and Venice and joined by many Italian Partisans.

PPA vehicles are shown during a 48-hour rest and refit period on the campus of the University of Padua, Italy, in the spring of 1945.

On Sunday, March 30, 2008, Popski's birthday, the PPA Memorial was unveiled by Sir Robert Crawford CBE, director-general of the British Imperial War Museum, assisted by Captain Campbell, and dedicated in the presence of nearly 250 PPA, LRDG, SAS, and Partisan veterans, relatives, and friends. It sits in the center of the Allied Special Forces Association's Memorial Grove within the British National Memorial Arboretum (inspired by the USA's Arlington Cemetery) in Staffordshire, in the very center of the United Kingdom. □

Australian author John Brown has written frequently for WWII History. *He resides in Minyama, Queensland.*

By Blaine Taylor

John H. Bloecher, Jr., Archives, Baltimore

The specter of Fascism haunts Italy in this propaganda poster that was displayed publicly during the rise of Mussolini's totalitarian regime.

The Fabled March

A worried King Victor Emmanuel questioned the trustworthiness of Benito Mussolini on the eve of the Fascist March on Rome.

ON MARCH 23, 1919, BUT FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE ARMISTICE THAT ENDED the Great War—100 young toughs, ex-Italian Army war veterans, former socialist politicians, and newspapermen met in Milan's Piazza San Sepolchro in industrial northern Italy to form a new political party. By the fall of 1922, the Fascists numbered over 300,000 members.

Dissatisfied with the territorial gains gleaned from Liberal Italy's participation in the war on the Allied side during 1915-1918, these angry young men, typified by 39-year-old Benito Mussolini, formed the Fasci di Combattimento, which their leader [Il Duce] himself defined as "The Bundles of Battle." He was referring to the ancient Roman Imperial symbol of an axe surrounded by rods bound together, as their past and present symbol of authority and power.

Mussolini had served in World War I as a combat-wounded Bersaglieri, a member of one of Italy's most elite formations. Other members of the new Fascist Party included the Alpini, mountain troops, and also the more renowned Arditi, assault soldiers, who mimicked the famed German storm troopers of 1918.

The Italian versions of these shock troops, however, were far more colorful than their German cousins, reportedly going into battle armed with daggers in their clenched teeth and grenades in both hands on the very heels of artillery barrages, so as to take the unsuspecting Austro-Hungarian enemy by total surprise. More than half of the Arditi's members were tough peasant boys, while the very meaning of the word Ardito was "audacious man."

Formed in June 1917 as special forces, they ran on campaign rather than marched, and one of their commanding officers asserted, "You are the first, the best … the future owners of Italy … the new Italian generation, fearless and brilliant. You will prepare the great future of Italy! The smile of the beautiful Italian woman is your reward!"

This was pretty heady stuff for the young soldiers of that era. The Arditi wore the fearsome skull and crossbones on their caps, gave stiff-armed Roman salutes with unsheathed daggers, and chanted, "To us!" Not only did Mussolini, then the editor of the fiery newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy), adopt all of these martial trappings for his new Fascists, but 25 Arditi soldiers guarded his offices in Milan, and four times they burned down those of the rival Socialist paper *Avanti!* (Advance!).

Fearing these very soldiers, traditional, Liberal Italy had disbanded the Arditi in December 1918, within a month of the end of the war, but Mussolini promptly reorganized them into Fascist squads, roving bands of men wearing black shirts and trousers and red fez caps, who terrorized their political opponents all over Italy with physical violence.

They shared the anguish of what poet, war pilot, and political activist Gabriele D'Annunzio defined as Liberal Italy's "mutilated victory" in World War I that denied it the fruits of victory. One of these was the Adriatic seaport city of Fiume in the new state of Yugoslavia,

VICTORS OR VANQUISHED?

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by Douglas E. Nash

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As the Allies arrived at the frontiers of Germany itself in the last autumn of WWII, the Germans responded with a variety of initiatives designed to regain the strategic advantage. While the Wonder Weapons such as the V-2 missile are widely recognized, the Volks-Grenadier Divisions (VGDs) are practically unknown. Often confused with the Volkssturm, the Home Guard militia, VGDs have suffered the undeserved reputation as second-rate formations, filled with young boys and old men suited to serve only as cannon fodder. This ground-breaking book shows that VGDs were actually conceived as a new, elite corps loyal to the National Socialist Party and equipped with the finest weapons available. After delving into a trove of recently discovered documents from the 272nd VGD's Füsilier Company, author Doug Nash has deftly woven the company and division history with the first-hand accounts of its soldiers. Follow the füsiliers from their first battles in the Huertgen Forest to their final defeat in the Harz Mountains, learn the enormous potential of VGDs, and feel their soldiers' heartbreak at their failure.

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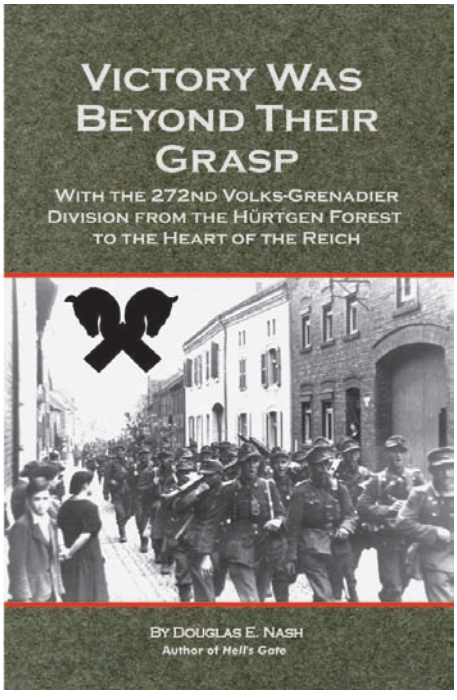

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Dressed in full military uniform, a beaming Mussolini appears confident and resolute before a crowd of admirers.

which all Italians felt should rightly become the spoils of victorious Italy.

On September 12, 1919, D'Annunzio led a small force of former Arditi in a swift occupation of Fiume in opposition to the Italian government of King Victor Emmanuel III, who had been on the throne since the assassination of his father in 1900.

Secretly, both the king and the regular Italian Army favored the occupation, but it also put them in direct confrontation with their fellow Allied victors of World War I—France, Great Britain, and the United States. "Where an Arditi is," the occupiers boasted, "there is a flag. No enemy shall pass. The Arditi are the real vanguard of the nation," they proclaimed.

Nevertheless, it was imperative that the king, who at 5 feet, 3 inches in height, was nicknamed contemptuously as "Little Sword," reassert his authority, as among both the ranks of the Arditi and the other Fascists were many republicans who wanted nothing better than to see the antiquated, 900-year-old ruling House of Savoy swept aside as it finally was by a popular vote after World War II. The king's most ardent supporters were the royalist officers of the Italian Army, but even many of these had Fascist sympathies.

Initially, ex-Socialist Mussolini had been one of these fiery republicans, asserting, "The king is nothing more than a useless citizen," and in 1912 he even made the antinationalist proclamation, "The Italian flag is fit only for a dung heap!" He had also opposed Liberal Italy's imperialist war of aggression in Libya against the Turks in 1911 that witnessed the first usage of aircraft in modern warfare.

What caused Mussolini's politics to veer from far left to hard right was the coming of World War I in 1914, when Italy balked at joining its first set of allies, the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and chose neutrality instead.

This was also the position of Socialist Mussolini, who was then editor of *Avanti!* His later critics charged that it was French gold received in bribes that led Mussolini to come out in 1915 for Italian intervention in the war on the Allied side instead. Enraged, the Socialists expelled Mussolini from their party, and Bersaglieri Corporal Mussolini was wounded at the front when a mortar exploded. Notably, he was twice visited in the hospital by the king and was feted as a political celebrity among both enlisted men and their officers. He thus arrived on the national scene as a war veteran.

During D'Annunzio's Fiume occupation, he and the Duce, who united all Fascists around his person under the spell of his fiery oratory and inflammatory newspaper editorials, several times discussed the possibility of a joint march on Rome to seize political power by simply taking the capital by force and kicking out the longtime Liberal Party cabinet. The main question was: What would the king, the Army, and the Carabinieri (military police) do?

Mussolini had other pressing concerns as well. First, he feared that D'Annunzio would march without him and thus upstage him a second time, as he had done earlier at Fiume. He also worried that his younger Fascist lieutenant, the red-haired "Iron Beard" Italo Balbo, would likely move on his own.

Then came the thunderclap of Bloody Christmas Eve, December 24, 1920, as the king ordered the Italian Army and Navy to crush the Arditi forces in Fiume. By January 5, 1921, D'Annunzio's occupation was over. This disaster marked the end of the Arditi's support for the colorful poet soldier and the massive start of their real swing toward Mussolini and his Fascists.

Mussolini, a quiet, thoughtful, shrewd political planner as well as a revolutionary, drew several conclusions from the Fiume debacle: The police would often overlook Fascist depredations in favor of attacking their traditional leftist enemies the Socialists. The police would also fire on opponents of the monarchy. More importantly, the Duce observed, so would the military. Therefore, he realized he had to win over the king, the police, and the armed forces by a clever mix of both public bluster and behind-the-scenes, old-fashioned political maneuvering to attain appointed or elective office by legal means.

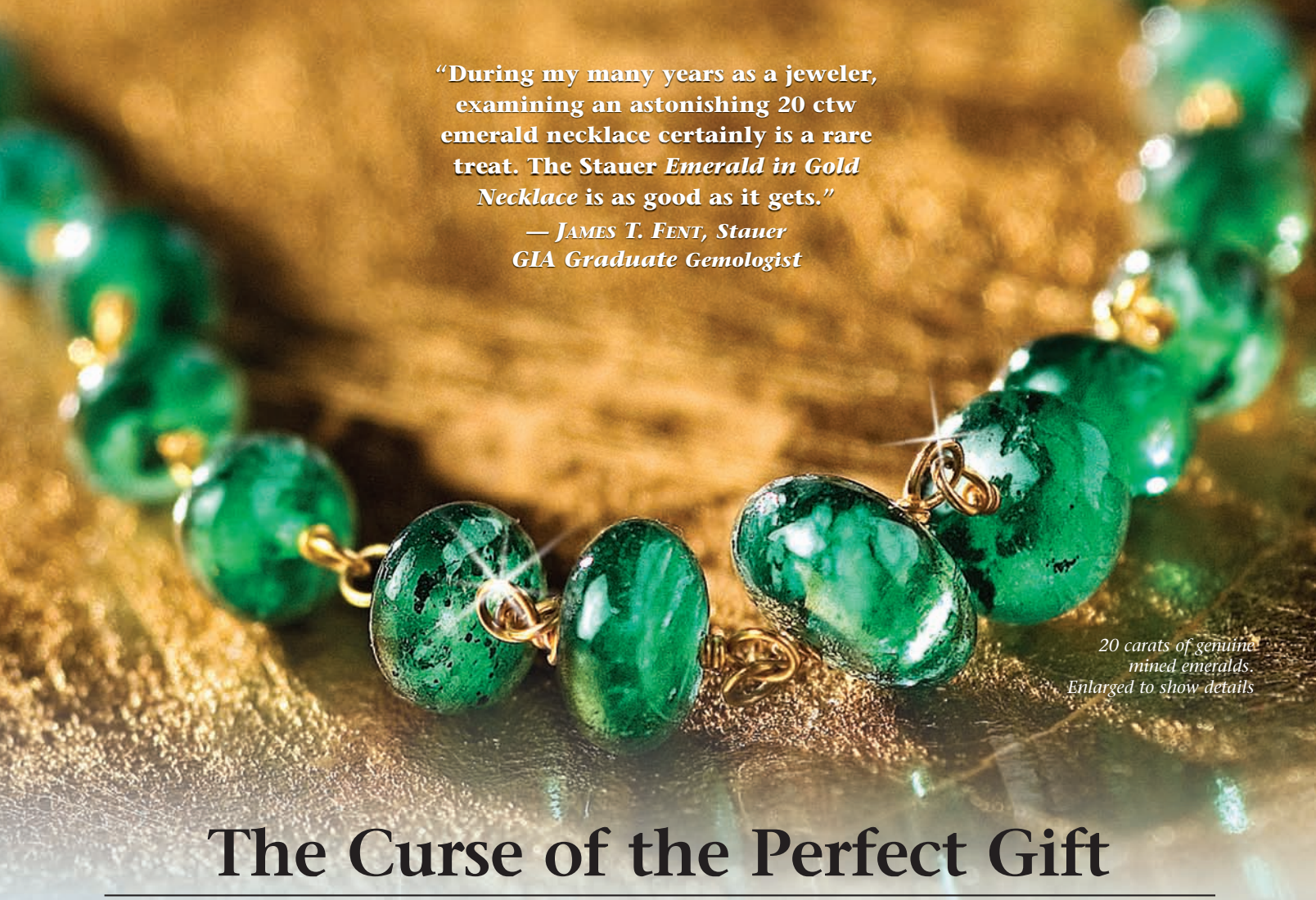
In the national election of May 1921, the Duce himself was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in Rome to occupy one of 35 Fascist Party seats. Although he rarely attended its sessions because he held the chamber in contempt, Deputy Mussolini nevertheless appreciated the accompanying free railway ticket on the state railroad system, which he later reformed and also that he was held legally immune from prosecution while in office.

In 1921, his party posted at the middle of the list of deputies. Ahead of the Fascists were 159 Liberal Democrats, 146 Socialists, and 104 Popular Party members; while behind it were 26 Agrarians, 11 Communists, 10 Republicans, and 12 members of German-Italian and Slavic-Italian splinter groups. Clearly, in order to be appointed to office as prime minister—Mussolini's initial goal—the Duce's fourth-place Fascist Party would have to enter government in a coalition cabinet with other parliamentary parties and their leaders.

But Mussolini also faced a problem unique to him. His party was the only one that had organized and sometimes even armed groups of violent adventurers dedicated to wreaking murder and mayhem across the land in order to seize power. His biggest fear, again, was that his plans for gradual success would be overtaken by both the activities of these groups and other events and that he would be forced to take Rome. That is exactly what happened.

Later, he said that his basic decision to launch a Fascist "March on Rome" was made by him alone on October 12, 1922, after a stormy rally at Cremona on September 24, at which his massed supporters chanted, "To Rome! To Rome!" He made this known to his subordinates at a party summit of the Milan Fascios on October 16, and he developed a five-part plan to execute the march at Florence on the 21st.

The formal Fascist Militia, incorporating all the various Arditi bands and squads, emerged



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Benito Mussolini is shown at center with his black shirt adorned by a sash. To his left stands future Air Marshal Italo Balbo, a national hero who had thrilled the populace with his aerial exploits. Achille Starace, the future secretary of the Fascist Party, is seen at far right. This photo was taken in October 1922.

on the 24th during a massive rally at Naples. In a national proclamation on the 27th that began with, "This is the situation," Mussolini ended with the declaration, "Fascism wants power, and will have it!"

He also claimed to have appointed the four Quadrumviri leaders of the march, headquartered at Perugia's Brufani Palace and that would begin in towns and villages and then converge on Rome in several mobile columns. These four men were General Emilio de Bono, 58, former commander of the regular Army's IX Corps, his chief military adviser who opposed the march, asserting that it would take six months to plan and execute; Deputy Cesare Maria De Vecchi, who was used as an emissary with the king; Party General Secretary Michele Bianchi, the man closest to the Duce; and the rebellious Balbo, 25, who wanted to wrest the national leadership from the elder Mussolini.

To arm their ragtag army of 26,000 Fascist Arditi, illicit stores of arms and ammunition were received secretly from sympathetic police stations and some Army barracks, while armories and even museums were raided for antique firearms. The overall array of weaponry included shotguns, muskets, powder-loaded pistols, golf clubs, scythes, garden hoes, tree roots, table legs, dynamite sticks, dried salt codfish, and even an ox's jawbone!

Horses, carts, trucks, wagons, bicycles, and even a race car with a machine gun mounted on it were employed for transport, along with the more mobile trains, while many more moved toward the capital on foot.

Aside from King Victor Emmanuel, 55, Mussolini had to out-bluff the country's Liberal Party leader, Premier Luigi Facta, 63, who wanted to crush the brewing rebellion with force. So did the chief of staff of the Army, General Pietro Badoglio, 47, and also General Emanuele Pugliese, commander of the well-armed and loyal garrison of Rome, which had machine guns, armored cars, and artillery.

The nervous, jittery Duce feared, too, that if he managed to have Facta fired by the king, his majesty might reappoint the 80-year-old former Prime Minister Giovanni Gioliitti, a hard-line anti-Fascist, to office.

The king, who had appointed a succession of 20 prime ministers thus far during a 22-year reign and attempted to work with six governments in the past three years, was not so sure. His minister of war, World War I hero General Armando Diaz, who was pro-Fascist, told him, "The Army will do its duty, but it would be better not to put it to the test."

Meanwhile, troops and barbed wire surrounded the king's own 16th-century Quirinale Palace above Rome, where 200 cavalry on white horses paraded alongside turreted armored cars with candy-striped towers. Rome's seven hills, 15 gates, and 17 bridges over the river Tiber were all patrolled as well.

His Majesty was a shy, timid man mainly interested in saving his throne and his dynasty from civil war and from his rival cousin Amadeo, the Duke of Aosta, 53, who was known to be flirting with the Fascists to be named regent. Victor Emmanuel III threatened to abdicate as the German kaiser and Russian czar both had done during 1917-1918. He believed that the Italian middle class would accept Mussolini and his Fascists as the lesser of all evils, and he was right.

General Pugliese, meanwhile, demanded that

martial law be declared, and Premier Facta, president of the Royal Council, induced the king to promise a state-of-siege order at 9 PM on the 27th, only to have the king refuse to sign it the next day. Facta resigned, and then began the hasty political negotiations of a host of former Italian premiers to return to office, all of them desiring the Fascist Party Duce as their number two man, vice premier. He balked.

Mussolini had remained calm in Milan the previous few days, working in his office, driving in the countryside, and being seen at the theater on two nights running, as if nothing was happening. However, he kept a getaway car waiting to take him to safety in nearby Switzerland if things went awry. His office telephone was tapped by the police.

The celebrated March on Rome was duly launched at dawn in pouring rain, and in temperatures of nine degrees above zero Fahrenheit, on October 28, 1922. When he learned that the king had refused to order martial law that same day, Mussolini knew that he had won, even though a reported seven Blackshirts had been shot down by Army troops at Cremona. In all, a dozen people died, but after the march the Fascists inflated that death toll to a whopping and false 3,000 to make their "struggle" appear all the more heroic.

Mussolini's own Milan newspaper office was barricaded with huge rolls of newsprint paper and barbed wire and guarded by a curious mix of Fascists, police, and Army troops. His second-floor offices featured hand grenades in desk trays, and the flustered Duce himself was seen brandishing a rifle. Melodramatically, he wrote in his 1928 autobiography, "There was a rapid exchange of shots ... I had my rifle loaded and went down to defend the doors.... Bullets whistled around my ears."

In fact, the Milan police chief refused to arrest him, and the mayor and commander of the Royal Guard jointly asked for a truce, thus withdrawing their men a further 200 yards away. The immediate crisis thus passed.

Even as the new Fascist Militia, organized in Imperial Roman cohorts and legions with consuls and zone commanders, began marching, they were soon seizing telephone switchboards, telegraph offices, waterworks, post offices, and other government buildings all over Italy.

The now confident Mussolini refused three phone calls from the palace to come to Rome to form a new coalition government cabinet, with him in the top spot as Italy's youngest ever premier. He demanded that the king's military aide, General Arturo Cittadini, send a telegram dictated by him, so that he would have the official request in writing. Like the king, the cau-

tious Duce also had fears, mainly of being arrested and shot as a rebel in Rome.

Victor Emmanuel offered to send a special train for him, but Mussolini and five aides took the regular Milan-Rome night sleeper express on October 29-30. Thus, his personal "March on Rome" consisted of a single 14-hour train ride in a railway carriage. He arrived in Rome and moved into a suite at the Savoy Hotel. He had almost flown in an aircraft and had even thought about disembarking from the train outside the city so that he could enter on horseback. He decided against entering the city mounted so as not to look overly ridiculous.

Mussolini saw the king at 11:45 AM in the Quirinale Palace reception room and became Liberal Italy's 60th premier since 1870. It was later alleged that he boomed out in greeting, "Your Majesty, I bring you the Italy of Vittorio Veneto," an Italian World War I victory, but claimed himself that he actually said, "Your Majesty will forgive my attire. I have come from the battlefield," which he had not. The king found him "a man of purpose," and the Duce said that the new duo went forward "from that day onward" as the team that dominated now Fascist-Savoyard Italy for the next 23 years.

Initially, Mussolini took appointed office not only as premier but also as foreign minister and interior minister, and in the latter post appointed General De Bono as his new chief of police, with Balbo heading the Fascist Militia. He had Premier Facta escorted out of office by an 11-man Fascist honor guard because he had lost a son in the war.

Il Duce's first cabinet meeting was held in his second-floor suite at the Savoy, a long way from his cheap apartment at 38 Foro Bonaparte, where he had left his family back in Milan.

As he had told his brother Arnaldo, "If only our father were alive!" His wife Rachele, upon hearing the news, exclaimed, "What a character!"

The next day, October 31, 1922, the marching Fascist columns finally arrived in Rome. On November 1, Mussolini had them march out again to the train station, so that they could all return home.

The withdrawing Fascist columns marched with palm leaves fluttering ahead past the Quirinale Palace in a five-hour parade that day, as the king, his new premier, and General Diaz reviewed it from the royal balcony. The king declared, "Mussolini has saved the nation. The House of Savoy must be grateful."

The Roman population agreed. The lire fell in value, but the stock market improved. The Eternal City was swept by a holiday mood, with flag-armed crowds demonstrating their approval in front of the Quirinale and all florist shops quickly selling out their wares. Martial law was not declared, and Fascism was seen by most as the last resort to the feared alternative of anarchy and Red revolution, although there was, indeed, no such latter threat at all.

Benito Mussolini, the blacksmith's son from the village of Forli, had been brought to office by the successive failure of several Liberal governments, a general apathy to politics, and the fear of high taxes and social reform on the part of the landed gentry that financed the Fascist Party.

The new first lady of Fascist Italy later told a story about an early visitor to her now famous husband: a Carabinieri sergeant who had brought a truncheon. He wanted to beg the Duce's forgiveness for having arrested him during a demonstration in Forli and to offer him the truncheon he had whacked him with.

"I forgave him—and took the truncheon," Mussolini had said, "philosophically." □

Towson, Maryland, freelancer Blaine Taylor is the author of six books on the World War II era, the most recent being Hitler's Headquarters from Beer Hall to Bunker, 1920-45, *published in 2007.*

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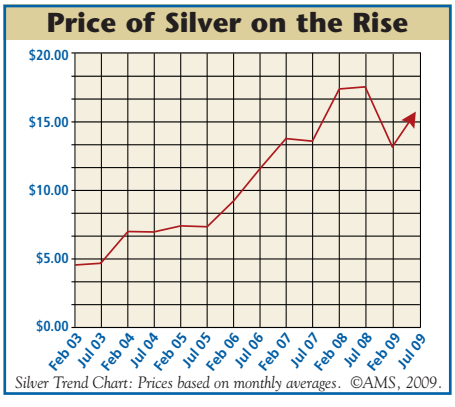

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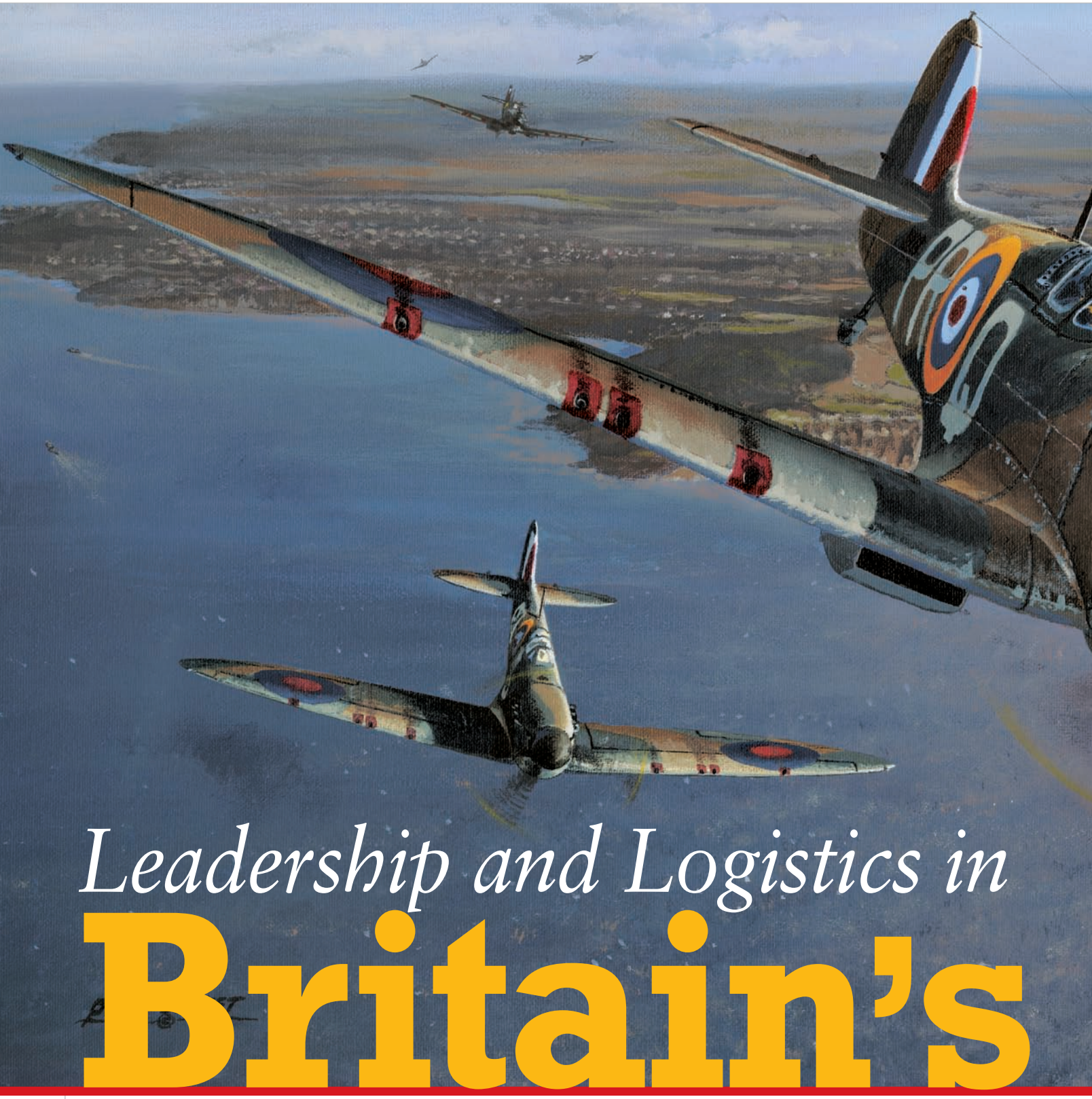

Leadership and Logistics in Britain's

The British Royal Air Force saved its island nation from invasion during the dark days of 1940.

BY GRANT MATLA

It was a battle fought without armies. No rifles, no tanks, no barbed wire. In the summer of 1940, the skies above Britain served as the battlefield for the British Royal Air Force and the German Luftwaffe. The Nazis had conquered most of Western Europe, and Britain stood

Spitfires of No. 609 Squadron return to base at Warmwell to rearm and refuel after an intercept mission against enemy aircraft trying to disrupt shipping along the southern coast of England. INSET: Preparing to enter the gun turret of his Boulton Paul Defiant Mark I fighter at its base at Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, a gunner of No. 264 Squadron, RAF, smiles confidently over his shoulder. The Defiant was obsolete by the time this photo was taken in August 1940.

Painting by Philip E. West, courtesy Philip E. West/SWA Fine Art Publishers, www.swafineart.com

Skies

Imperial War Museum

alone. The Luftwaffe represented the first arm of the German military juggernaut to take a swing at the British Isles. Its mission was simple: repeat the performances in Poland and France and eliminate the enemy air force.

This would facilitate an invasion, which the Germans had no reason to believe would fail. The Luftwaffe's crack pilots, many of them experienced since 1936 in the Spanish Civil War, included men like the dashing and headstrong Adolf Galland and deadly tactical genius Werner Mölders. The RAF stood grossly out-

numbered, outgunned, and outmanned. Therein lies the importance of the Battle of Britain. The RAF, subsequently nicknamed "The Few" by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, held the responsibility of not only defending Britain from the Luftwaffe but also defeating the German pilots and thwarting Hitler's plan for invasion. Despite German numerical and tactical superiority, higher echelons of leadership in the RAF proved more strategically flexible and adapted to the situations and parameters of the battle better than their Luftwaffe counterparts.

By the spring of 1940, World War II had begun only months earlier but looked to possibly end within the year. The French defense against the Germans ranged from abysmal to nonexistent, and the British Expeditionary Force evacuated Dunkirk in mid-June, as French Marshal Philippe Pétain sought an armistice with Germany. Resiliently, Churchill declared to Parliament on June 18, "The Battle of France is over. I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin."

With France removed from the picture, Germany looked to attack Britain, the last bastion of resistance. In preparation for a decisive victory, Hitler issued Directive Number 16, which charged Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring with the task of softening up Britain. Arrogant and pompous, Göring guaranteed the destruction of the RAF. Göring fully expected the RAF to flounder and fall from the sky.

Göring had little reason to assume the RAF could withstand a full-force assault. During the battles over France and Norway, the RAF lost 1,020 planes, 509 of which were fighters. According to the battle order of the RAF on July 1, 1940, this left 900 fighters in 10, 11, 12, and 13 Groups, responsible for the defense of England. Of these, 151 (17 percent) were Bristol Blenheims and Boulton Paul Defiants, although the majority of the squadrons were equipped with Hawker Hurricanes, and to a lesser extent, the Supermarine Spitfire. To add to these numbers, fighter production in June of 1940 was 446. The count of Hurricanes and Spitfires would increase to 972 in July and August.

In terms of pilots, the RAF faced a bleak situation. Planes were available, but pilots were not. Since 1939, the British had produced only 200 new pilots every month. Those men were not likely to be considered veterans, since the only combat they had encountered was over France and Norway. In all, Fighter Command could muster 591 serviceable (combat ready) fighters and 1,200 pilots. As optimistic as these figures were, one must remember that several squadrons would be rotated out for rest if the head of Fighter Command, Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, could spare them. This was not often, as the pressure from the Germans forced all available aircraft to remain at the ready.

It was more likely that individual pilots were sent for rest when they reached the limits of their nerves, suffering from exhaustion. This was done on an individual basis since the stress of combat affected each man differently.

RAF pilots came from a few different strands before they manned a squadron. Pilots were schooled at Cranwell, which was the pinnacle of British flight schools. Also, Halton trained those who were of a social position that was not high enough for Cranwell. Halton specialized in ground crew rather than pilots. Short service commissions were another option, with the promise of an officer's rank for six years followed by four in the reserve, with all the accoutrements such a position carried. This method proved very popular, offering instant social advancement in the stratified English society.

The final method of induction into an RAF squadron was through the Auxiliary Air Force. The AAF began in the mid-1920s as a grouping of clubs for amateur flyers, intended to create a local identity in a social class. As the 1920s and 1930s progressed, these grew in number and were funded by the Air Ministry. By 1940, AAF squadrons made up one-quarter of Fighter Command's frontline strength, while those pilots with public school educations accounted for only 200 of the 3,000 pilots who would fly for the RAF in the Battle of Britain. The working class men accepting short-service commissions, which bypassed training at Cranwell, made up the majority of the pilots in 1940.

The pilots coming into the RAF looking to find themselves in the romantic role of a fighter pilot in 1940 flew a mixed bag of fighter planes. The oldest type was the Bristol Blenheim. A prewar design, the Blenheim was a twin-engine craft converted from reconnaissance to a night fighter/fighter-bomber. The plane had a top speed of 260 mph and carried either two or four machine guns, depending on design variant and role, and up to 1,000 pounds of bombs.

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With its distinctive butterfly wings prominent in this photo, a British Supermarine Spitfire fighter attacks a German Heinkel He-111 bomber during the Battle of Britain. The Spitfire was the most advanced fighter in the British arsenal at the time, and many pilots flew the capable Hawker Hurricane.

The Boulton Paul Defiant first appeared in May 1940. Its top speed was 303 mph, and its four machine guns were located in a manned turret immediately aft of the cockpit. This arrangement made it impossible to attack a target in front of the aircraft, as it had no fixed forward firing armament. The turret had been placed in a defensive position.

The most numerous fighter on the RAF airfields was the Hawker Hurricane Mk. I. The Hurricane was a fast fighter at 320 mph. It climbed beautifully (2,520 ft/min) and was a stable gun platform for the eight .303-caliber Browning machine guns in the wings. However, the most modern fighter in the British arsenal was the Supermarine Spitfire Mk. I. The beautifully aerodynamic "Spit" could reach 355 mph and held eight .303 Brownings, four in each wing. It could climb slightly faster than the Hurricane, ascending at 2,530 ft/min. Climb was of massive importance to the RAF, as the British had mere minutes to meet each incoming threat. Time was a crucial factor in the battle. The ability to get to fighting altitude (10,000 to 15,000 feet, usually) proved critical, and the aid of radar early warning would prove to be one of the vital British advantages in the battle.

Despite the large number of guns, which had a sustained firing time of 14 seconds for both the Hurricane and the Spitfire and dropped 13 pounds of ordinance in a three-second burst (as opposed to the Bf-109's 18 pounds), both planes were very maneuverable, with the Spitfire having a slight edge. The Spit was trickier to fly because of a high rate of roll due to its aerodynamics and powerful engine. This gave the plane incredible maneuverability, which would put it on par with the German fighters. This fact determined how the Spitfire was to be deployed during the battle. In July 1940, aircraft available to Fighter Command consisted of 463 Hurricanes, 286 Spitfires, 37 Defiants, and 114 Blenheims.

Across the English Channel from the RAF, the Luftwaffe boasted 2,909 aircraft in Luftflotten 2, 3, and 5. This included 1,260 twin-engine bombers, 316 dive-bombers, 280 twin-engine fighters, 809 single-engine fighters, and 244 various reconnaissance planes. The twin-engine bombers were the Heinkel He-111, the Dornier Do-17, and the Junkers Ju-88. Top speeds of these bombers were 252, 255, and 280 mph, respectively. They were light to medium-sized craft with medium payloads and poor defensive armament, but they proved tricky to shoot down. As for dive-bombers, the Germans employed their notorious Junkers Ju-87 Stuka. Despite success in France and Poland, the Stuka had a top speed of only 238 mph and proved extremely vulnerable to attack if unescorted.

Imperial War Museum

Lieutenant Colonel Werner Mölders, an early German fighter ace, confers with Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring during the Battle of Britain.

The difficulty in shooting down a German bomber owed to the inadequacy of the .303 round and to the self-sealing fuel tanks found in German aircraft. The self-sealing tanks worked by employing two layers of metal divided by a special rubber compound. When the tank was punctured, the fuel reacted with the rubber, causing the compound to swell and close the hole. This was only a temporary fix, which would allow the plane to return to base without losing appreciable fuel or bursting into flames.

In addition, the .303 round was not heavy, large, or powerful enough when it came to shooting at metal-skinned fighters. It was the same caliber that was used in World War I against planes made of wood and doped linen. During the interwar years, armor was installed in the cockpit, protecting the pilot, and planes were constructed more often of sturdier materials. The small caliber of the bullets decreased the amount of structural damage inflicted on metal skin.

The Germans encountered this same problem with their 7.92mm rounds, and both sides eventually switched to a .50-caliber (German 13mm) machine gun and 20mm or 30mm cannon to inflict greater damage.

The Luftwaffe possessed two frontline fighters, the Messerschmitt Bf-109 and Bf-110. On the eve of the Battle of Britain, a mystical aura surrounded the Bf-110. The RAF had yet to see one in combat and had only heard reports of the fast, heavy fighter with massive armament and two engines. Designed by Willy Messerschmitt, the Zerstörer could reach speeds of 336 mph. In the nose, it carried four 7.92mm (.311 caliber) machine guns and two 20mm cannon, with an additional machine gun in the rear of the cockpit to defend the tail.

Destined to become the most produced fighter of all time, the Bf-109's E variant topped out at 342 mph and carried two 7.92mm machine guns in the nose. In the wings it held two 20mm cannon. These inflicted massive structural damage on metal-skinned fighters and bombers. The 109 was small, maneuverable, and fast. Most importantly, its Daimler-Benz DB 601 engine had fuel injection, which meant the aircraft would not stall in a negative-G maneuver such as a dive or a split-S. This enabled it to outdive any British plane in the sky.

The 109 did not have sufficient range (410 miles) to operate over England for much more than 15 minutes—especially at full throttle as would be the case in combat—so this trait enabled it to retreat effectively in the event a fight would last more than the usual few minutes.

The thin wings of the 109 did not provide as much area for lift, thereby limiting its performance at extremely low altitude, and narrow landing gear resulted in inherently unstable ground characteristics. Many novice pilots would wreck their 109s while landing too fast or unevenly. In fact, Messerschmitt's prototype crashed in a ground loop during trials in 1936. The pilot, World War I ace Ernst Udet, was unharmed. By 1940, Germany was producing 6,618 aircraft per year, 25 percent of them fighters.

Flying the abundance of planes in the Luftwaffe arsenal were some of the most experienced pilots in the world. In 1936, when men who would fly for the RAF in the Battle of Britain did not even entertain the thought of joining the service, Luftwaffe pilots were dogfighting in Spanish skies. Later, many of these men would be commanders over Poland, France, and Britain, exponentially increasing the skill of the German pilots.

On paper in June 1940, the Battle of Britain looked one-sided. The only advantage apparent to the RAF was the fact that its pilots were defending their homeland. In addition to the motivational aspects of this, it held an advantage in regard to personnel. Pilots in World War II were more likely to survive an encounter than their fathers had been in World War I. Para-

chutes were now standard equipment as opposed to contraband during the Great War. When RAF pilots bailed out during the Battle of Britain, they could be back at their squadron within a few hours. Luftwaffe pilots, however, became spectators if they "hit the silk" over England, consigned to a POW camp or a long swim back to their airfield.

The Battle of Britain would be decided by tactics and leadership if the British hoped to survive. The men of the RAF knew the Luftwaffe was good. They had proven it over Spain, Poland, and France. Messerschmitt's fighters carried a daunting reputation, and the Stuka was feared around the world. In contrast, the Luftwaffe viewed the RAF pilots as nascent weekend warriors who lacked the skills to compete with the deadly German aces. This is not to say the Germans did not have any respect for the RAF, as Luftwaffe pilots were intimately familiar with the Spitfire, and held it in the same regard that the RAF held the 109.

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ABOVE: The only Hawker Hurricane from the Battle of Britain still flying today is this Mk 1, which flew 49 combat sorties from its base at Croydon, England. Its pilots destroyed three enemy aircraft and damaged two others. LEFT: The only Supermarine Spitfire that flew during the Battle of Britain and is still airworthy today is this Mk IIA. The Spitfire became the stuff of legend during the difficult days of the Battle of Britain.

Affectionately known as "Stuffy" for his personality and terse demeanor, Dowding was the senior serving officer of the RAF. The outbreak of war postponed his retirement, and the 58-year-old understood technical and logistical matters exceptionally well, which would be illustrated in the upcoming battle. Dowding had led Fighter Command since its inception in 1936. Under his direct command were the group commanders. Air Vice Marshals Richard Saul, Trafford Leigh-Mallory, Keith Park, and Sir Christopher Quintin Brand commanded 13, 12, 11, and 10 Groups, respectively. Of these, 12 Group was responsible for central England while 11 Group covered London and southeastern England. Leigh-Mallory, the senior group commander, was expecting to command 11 Group. Dowding's appointment of Park to the position was based on the fact that Park was a World War I ace with 20 kills and an expert in fighter tactics and organization. Nevertheless, the slight alienated Leigh-Mallory, who saw himself as relegated to a secondary role.

From the outset Trafford Leigh-Mallory and Keith Park did not see eye to eye. Park, who flew his personal Hurricane to check up on his pilots in combat, commanded 22 fighter squadrons over the most important area of the country. Leigh-Mallory was assigned to support Park, and his 14 squadrons would cover 11 Group's bases when they went up after the German raiders. Because 11 Group's area was closer to the French coast and held the priority targets, logistics made it more reasonable for Park's fighters to be the first wave of attackers. Nevertheless, this created animosity among Leigh-Mallory, Park, and Dowding. The approaches each man took to thwart the Luftwaffe would directly affect the outcome of the battle.

Göring, a World War I ace, had become Hitler's most dedicated sycophant, declaring "If the Führer wants it, two and two make five!" In the early years of the Nazi party, Göring had held several political offices and exhibited great energy and skill in these duties. By the end of the 1930s, he had become addicted to painkillers. He had also become a corpulent Nazi robot, whose ambition led him to greed, complacency, and lavish excess and created a schism between him and his pilots. Once war broke out, Göring was extremely powerful, second only to Hitler in the Nazi hierarchy. But his power and arrogance clouded his judgment.

Göring's Luftwaffe fielded three air fleets, two in France and one in Norway, in preparation for the attack on Britain. Col. Gen. Hans-Jurgen Stumpff was an old staff officer in command of Luftflotte 5 in Norway. His forces took heavy losses in their only day of fighting during the Battle of Britain on August 15, losing 75 planes out of 258, mostly 110s and bombers—nearly a 30 percent loss rate. As a result, the remainder of Luftflotte 5 would serve as replacements for the men of Luftflotten 2 and 3.

In command of Luftflotte 3 was Field Marshal Hugo Sperrle. He was the most experienced air officer in the Luftwaffe having seen action in World War I and commanded the Condor Legion in Spain. The most influential Luftflotte commander was Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, a former army officer who led Luftflotte 2, which was located in the Dunkirk area and included much of the Luftwaffe fighter strength.

As these forces prepared for the coming showdown, it became apparent that the Battle

of Britain was going to be unlike any fought before. It was a rarity not only because of the nature of the fighting—air to air—but also in the respect that it had no exact dates. The battle was fought daily (weather permitting), in raid after raid, over several months.

It began in earnest on the afternoon of July 10, 1940, when 20 Do-17s, 30 Bf-110s, and 20 Bf-109s attacked a westbound convoy in the Channel. Thirty British fighters attempted to intercept them. Peter Townsend, commander of 85 Squadron, described this engagement. "Our job was defense. German fighters could do no harm to Britain. German bombers with their deadly loads were the menace. Our orders were to seek them out and destroy them. Only when their Me. 109 [*sic*] escort interfered did it become a fleeting battle between fighter and fighter. But we tried to avoid them, not to challenge them ... Three Hurricanes and four 109s were lost that day ... In four patrols I flew for nearly six hours."

During the remainder of July and into the first two weeks of August, German Do-17s, He-111s, and Ju-87s assaulted shipping and coastal regions of England. Bf-109s ravaged British Hurricanes, while Spitfires fared slightly better. The weaknesses of the Stuka, slow speed and virtual paralysis when coming out of a dive, were taken advantage of by swarms of RAF fighters looking to pounce. As a consolation to the Luftwaffe, Bf-109s exploited the weaknesses of the Defiants, which made easy prey for the nimble and powerful 109.

Two formations of German fighters jumped a flight of nine Defiants on July 19, shooting six down and crippling another before a squadron of Hurricanes interceded. It also became apparent quickly that the Bf-110 could not compete with single-engine fighters. The 110 proved highly vulnerable to Hurricanes and Spitfires, which could easily outmaneuver them. The twin-engine craft simply could not outturn or outrun the Spitfire.

By the end of the month, the RAF had shot down 155 Luftwaffe planes to a loss of 69 fighters. The reason for this disparity is simple. There were more German planes in the air, which gave the RAF more targets to shoot down. Also, the Germans had bombers in the air, and the RAF did not. Bombers were slower, less maneuverable, and did not have adequate defensive armament. The Germans also sank approximately 20 coastal merchant ships and a destroyer.

A need for a change in the British fighter tactics was apparent. According to Pilot Officer Harold "Birdy" Bird-Wilson, "Our standard formation was an extremely tight one, which would have been ideal for prewar air shows. Very compact. Very close together. The pilots in formation were looking at each other so as not to collide. We were not looking around as we should have. The Germans, who had learned many flying lessons during the Spanish Civil War, knew better. They flew in much looser formations and were able to pick us off."

The lessons during the Spanish Civil War were advocated by Mölders, who had shot down 14 planes in Spain. Mölders created, pioneered, and taught the Finger Four formation. This was the "looser formation" described by Bird-Wilson. Finger Four worked by using pairs as the operative tactical groups. There were two pairs (Rotten) to a Schwarm, three or four Schwarmen to a Staffel, three or four Staffeln to a Gruppe, and three or four Gruppen to a Geschwader. Pairs were chosen because of their inherent versatility. Only one other plane needed to be tracked, and it simplified mutual defense. It also made it easier to know where one's wingman was during combat, as pilots now only had to track one plane instead of two. Finger Four allowed great flexibility in combat, mutual defense capabilities, and the wide spacing of 200 feet between planes made spotting a flight more difficult than seeing a tightly bunched British formation.

On August 1, 1940, Hitler issued Führer Directive Number 17, which dramatically altered the course of the battle. The directive ordered the complete destruction of the RAF, with attacks against "flying units, their ground installations, and their supply organization, also against the aircraft industry including that manufacturing anti-aircraft equipment."

This was effectively an intensification and restatement of the aims of the original plan. It expanded the scope of the raids to include supply and production channels as well. The directive ordered the Luftwaffe not to destroy ports, as they would be important to forthcoming operations. The date for the intensification of the aerial campaign was August 5.

Göring also called his commanders to The Hague in an effort to organize the Luftwaffe for the large-scale attack. Göring dismissed claims that the Spitfire was a worthy craft and did not believe Sperrle and Kesselring when they estimated the Luftwaffe had 700 bombers remaining. Up to this point, Göring had been convinced that the Luftwaffe had the RAF beaten. In fact, Göring stated that the RAF was down to its last 50 Spitfires, a belief he held through September. He underestimated the quality of the RAF and was too aloof to realize that the Luftwaffe had taken large losses in the first month of battle.

The reason for the effectiveness of RAF interceptions of German bombers was quite simple. The British radar system worked incredibly well. Beginning in the early 1930s, Britain had experimented with radar, and by 1938 the system was so advanced that it could report size, speed, altitude, heading, and whether or not the plane was friendly. The Germans knew about the British radar but chose to ignore it. The towers at Dover could be seen from the French coast. This proximity gave the Germans the false hope that the bombers, even though they showed up on radar, would be able to attack their targets before the information could be passed through the proper channels.

Radar operators sent reports to Observer Corps, which forwarded them to the Filter Room at Fighter Command headquarters. There, the group operation room and group commander (Park) notified individual sections, whose local commanders vectored in the nearest available fighters.

The German commanders, most notably Göring, refused to believe this sophisticated system existed despite the insistence of his pilots that the RAF was always waiting in the right places. This was a massive blunder on his part, costing him precious aircrews and aircraft. Consequently, attacks on radar stations were few during the opening phase of the Battle of Britain, and no effort was made to avoid detection. In reality, the system worked so well that the time from a blip on the radar to a squadron in the air to meet it was six minutes, and the aforementioned climb rates of the Hurricanes and Spitfires put the fighters at 15,000 feet within six minutes of leaving the ground. In effect, it took between 10 and 15 minutes after first spotting the Germans to put together a proper intercept at the point of attack.

"OUR JOB WAS DEFENSE. GERMAN FIGHTERS COULD DO NO HARM TO BRITAIN. GERMAN BOMBERS WITH THEIR DEADLY LOADS WERE THE MENACE. OUR ORDERS WERE TO SEEK THEM OUT AND DESTROY THEM."

On August 8, the Luftwaffe finally attacked coastal radar installations. The attack aroused no suspicions in Fighter Command, however, as it was the only major activity of the month so far. The weather, which had been clear and perfect for flying since May, had been terrible for the first week of August. Had the weather remained conducive for flying, the Luftwaffe would have launched more raids on the radar stations and airfields in southern England. Instead, it granted both sides a much-needed respite, and the British noticed no change in German strategy.

That changed abruptly on August 12, when the weather cleared long enough for a large-scale German attack on radar installations and airfields. Low-level attacks would be used, converting some Bf-110s into fighter-bombers to achieve greater speed. These planes, along with hundreds of level bombers, began their raids at 9 AM. The goal of this operation was to knock out the eyes of the British.

The German attacks lasted all day, smashing radar stations in Ventnor, dropping 148 bombs on Manston, and damaging everything in between. Losses for the day totaled 31 German planes shot down to 22 RAF fighters, the latter figure resulting in the loss of 11 pilots. Göring and the leadership of the Luftwaffe believed that the British had been blinded and prepared to launch follow-up raids. Unknown to the Germans, the British worked through the night and repaired the majority of the damage from the day's raids by the next morning.

August 13, 1940, known as Adlertag, or Eagle Day, began with a message from Göring to commence a major bombing offensive. Unfortunately, the weather turned sour in the early morning and Göring postponed the attack. However, the postponement order never reached Oberst Johannes Fink, commander of Kampfgeschwader 2, who led his 74 Do-17s to England and attacked Sheerness and Eastchurch just after 7 AM, losing five bombers with five more suffering heavy damage.

In the afternoon, the weather broke, and Göring ordered the assault to proceed. By now, Fink's raid had alerted the British to the aims of the Luftwaffe. As German raiders bombed their targets and clashed with RAF fighters, it became apparent that this was a different tactic than the previous effort against shipping and other targets in the Channel, known as Kanalkampf. When the air action ended on the 13th, a total of 34 German planes and 13 RAF fighters had been shot down.

The attacks resumed with ferocity on August 14. RAF fighters shot down 71 German planes with the loss of 29 fighters. Of the 71, only eight were Bf-109s. Such results reflect British tactical doctrine adopted during the early days of the battle, the targeting of German bombers discussed by Peter Townsend. In an effort to codify this, Dowding allowed Hurricanes to assault the bombers, while Spitfires were tasked with handling the 109s.

This came about from necessity. The Hurricane was a stable gun platform and a ruggedly built fighter, but it was no match for the much faster, nimble 109. The Spitfire, incredibly maneuverable, was to deal with them. Although the 109 could outturn it, the Spitfire had a better chance against the German fighter, creating a rivalry that lasted the duration of the war.

In fighter against fighter combat, the Bf-109 was the best in the world in 1940. Its massive advantage lay in its armament. At the time, it was the only single-engine plane to carry cannon, and the E variant prevalent in the Battle of Britain carried one in each wing. These cannon fired exploding shells that could take down a metal-skinned fighter in one or two hits. Of equal importance was the mounting of twin machine guns above the engine, directly in front of the pilot. This meant the guns held an advantage of not needing "harmonization," the aiming of wing-mounted guns to a convergence point at a certain distance.

Initially, the RAF set harmonization at 600 yards for Hurricanes and Spitfires. At this distance, and because both the shooter and the target were traveling at over 300 mph, planes were incredibly difficult to hit. Also, one must consider the drop of the bullets as they travel that distance and the spread as they begin to lose accuracy. In light of this, many British pilots worked to get close (200-300 yards) before opening fire. The result was many missed opportunities.

A 600-yard harmonization meant that the pilots willing to work in close did not have their guns sighted to fire at this range, and the most destructive point of fire, the convergence or harmonization point, was 400 yards in front of the plane they had worked so hard to line up. Pilots began unofficially realigning their guns to harmonize at 250 yards, which increased the accuracy and effectiveness of RAF fighters.

The attacks on RAF airfields and radar installations continued throughout August and into September. Enraged that the RAF was still operational, Göring cleaned up his units. He fired his older wing commanders in fighter, attack, and bombing Geschwadern, replacing them with young, rising stars. Adolf Galland resisted his appointment as commander of JG 26, while Mölders readily took charge of JG 51. To Göring, the prolonging of the conflict, as it neared two full months, was the result of old men in command who lacked the energy and drive of younger men. It did not change German fortunes, as the RAF shot down more planes than it lost every day from August 26 to September 6.

On the night of August 24, a German

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ABOVE: Gun camera footage from the Spitfire flown by Pilot Officer M.E. Staples shows a German Messerschmitt Me-110 fighter frantically banking to port to elude the British pilot's machine-gun fire. Staples, a pilot of No. 609 Squadron, was one of those who proved the superiority of the Spitfire against most German bombers and twin-engine fighters during the Battle of Britain. BELOW: Squadron Leader Peter Townsend chats with two ground crewmen as they sit jauntily atop the wing of his Hawker Hurricane fighter based at Wick, Scotland. The Hurricane proved more effective against German bombers, while Spitfires attacked the enemy fighters during the Battle of Britain.

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bomber lost touch with its formation and dropped its payload on a residential area in the city of London. The following night, Churchill sent 80 bombers to attack Berlin. Indignant, Hitler ordered Göring to avenge this personal insult against German pride. Göring also believed that this would entice the remainder of Fighter Command into the skies for a great climactic battle, which would thoroughly destroy the RAF and completely demoralize the British people. The strategic shift took place on September 7.

Up to this point in the battle, Fighter Command was inflicting heavy losses on the Germans but was also sustaining losses it could not withstand. By August 24, Dowding had lost 80 percent of his squadron commanders. By September 6, Fighter Command had lost 295 Hurricanes and Spitfires with 171 more damaged, and 103 pilots were killed or missing with a further 128 wounded. The RAF could not sustain operations much longer as the German plan to win a battle of attrition began to succeed. It was the loss of the pilots that was most worrisome as British fighter production

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offset the battle losses. Due to a combination of poor intelligence, arrogance, and ignorance, Göring believed that the true number of British fighters was about 300 when he launched Adlertag.

On September 7, 1940, the Luftwaffe began attacking London at night. The initial "Blitz" would last for 10 days. Due to lack of onboard radar, RAF fighters were ineffective at night,

ullstein bild

ABOVE: Heading for the coast of England in September 1940, a squadron of German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters prepares to do combat with the Royal Air Force for supremacy of the air. LEFT: Shown in flight gear before taking off from an airfield on the island of Malta, Air Vice Marshal Sir Keith Park, a New Zealander, played a prominent role in managing Britain's fighter defenses against the onslaught of the German Luftwaffe.

which cut Luftwaffe losses. Without individual radar systems, the fighters had to be vectored in from the ground. Even then, it was up to a pilot's ability to see in the dark to spot the enemy planes. The Luftwaffe employment of night bombing in September was undertaken in part to terrorize British citizens and break morale.

The RAF used the week to recover from massive losses and regroup. Weekly losses dropped from nearly 300 planes to less than 150, and the suddenly resurgent RAF quickly began exacting revenge on the Luftwaffe.

Coinciding with the German shift in targets was the British switch in tactics. Wing Commander Douglas Bader of 242 Squadron had overcome the loss of both legs to become one of the most famous British aces of the battle. An outspoken, brash man, Bader advocated a strategy he called "Big Wing." This involved taking at least three squadrons into attacks simultaneously, similar to the German strategy. Dowding and Park both instantly rejected the theory, claiming the wing took too long to assemble into proper formation once airborne. Thus, Leigh-Mallory came to Bader's aid and chided

his peer and superior for their failure to utilize the tactics that held so much potential. Leigh-Mallory gave Bader three squadrons—19, 310, and Bader's own 242—which became known as the Duxford Wing.

The culmination of the battle came on September 15. Kesselring sent 400 fighters and 100 bombers to London. They had found 300 RAF fighters over southern England, when 200 fighters of the now five-squadron strong Duxford Wing arrived from the north. Although 60 German planes were shot down to the RAF loss of 26, the importance of the clash went beyond the material aspect. German pilots had been told that the RAF was ready for the knockout punch, with Göring restating his belief that England had merely 50 Spitfires remaining. However, Luftwaffe fliers had encountered 500 fighters simultaneously. They did not know that it was a gamble by the RAF, which had scrambled every fighter it could.

The fighting did not end on September 15, although it soon became recognized as the day the Luftwaffe lost the Battle of Britain. As for Operation Sea Lion, the proposed invasion of Britain, Hitler postponed it indefinitely. London would suffer from the Blitz as bombing raids continued throughout October. Historians often cite October 31 as the date on which the actual Battle of Britain concluded. RAF losses were 1,017 planes and 537 pilots in Fighter Command and 248 planes and nearly 1,000 men from Bomber and Coastal Commands. The Luftwaffe lost 1,733 planes and nearly 3,000 crewmen.

After the battle, Hugh Dowding was promptly fired, retiring shortly thereafter. Keith Park was also sacked. They were replaced by Sholto Douglas and Leigh-Mallory, respectively. This represented the shift in British tactics to Big Wing. Dowding was seen as part of the old guard. Bader and Leigh-Mallory had harped on Dowding and Park enough to taint their performances. Leigh-Mallory and Sholto Douglas were seen as more forward thinking. After his retirement, Dowding was made Lord Dowding of Bentley Priory. It was a small token for a man who orchestrated a phenomenally improbable victory during a crucial moment of the war.

Despite his opposition to Big Wing, Dowding had performed marvelously. His obsessively thorough delegation of orders and control of command and communication channels resulted in the RAF working with precision. The radar system, impeccably organized, worked with clocklike efficiency that even the Germans refused to believe. Dowding also proved masterful with his use of aircraft and pilots. He knew he had limited resources, and he appropriated them wisely. He never let the Germans know exactly how many planes he had, refusing to send up an all-out attack until the Germans did the same on September 15. The result of that action, his greatest bluff, was a decimation of German morale.

Dowding, as a commander, was coolheaded and stoic. He did not panic and commit too much too early, which surely would have cost the British dearly. Dowding's patience and excellent management of resources, a reflection of his "Stuffy" personality, gave Britain and the RAF every opportunity to triumph. His major mistake was his refusal to accept Big Wing, and to Parliament (thanks to Leigh-Mallory and Bader) it appeared that Big Wing had dealt the decisive blow. While the tactic certainly played a major role in increasing German losses, Dowding's contributions seem easily forgotten. The reality is that without Hugh Dowding the outcome of the Battle of Britain might well have been dramatically different.

THE RADAR SYSTEM, IMPECCABLY ORGANIZED, WORKED WITH CLOCKLIKE EFFICIENCY THAT EVEN THE GERMANS REFUSED TO BELIEVE. DOWDING ALSO PROVED MASTERFUL WITH HIS USE OF AIRCRAFT AND PILOTS.

In the Nazi system, Hermann Göring was incapable of accepting blame. Göring failed his subordinates and pilots with a lack of concern and ineffective direction of the battle. He knew about British radar, as he could stand at Calais and see the towers at Dover with his naked eye. Despite being told otherwise by his pilots, he was convinced that his planes could still reach operational areas ahead of the RAF fighters. Failure to properly deal with radar cost Göring the element of surprise and many aircraft.

Göring hopelessly clung to his admiration of the Bf-110, despite the obvious fact that single-engine fighters were vastly superior. Eventually, Bf-110s were escorted by Bf-109s, fighters escorting fighters. This illustrates just how far removed Göring was from the fighting, compared with Keith Park who was flying sorties in his personal Hurricane.

Another mistake the Luftwaffe made was the switch to London as a top-priority target. The Luftwaffe bombing of the British capital and other major cities caused the civilian population to suffer greatly, but it also provided a much needed respite for the rejuvenation of the RAF. It was an impetuous move that allowed the RAF some breathing room.

Meanwhile, the British made tactical judgments that benefited their situation. On the squadron level, RAF pilots began to copy the Finger Four formation used by the Luftwaffe. Pilots, by changing the harmonization points of their machine guns, worked to level the playing field. Catching an enemy plane with a burst at the harmonization point allowed maximum damage with a minimal amount of ammunition expended.

Strategically, the British advantage of radar, conveniently scoffed at by Göring, allowed Dowding to organize an effective response to German incursions. Dowding scrambled appropriate numbers of fighters to deal with each threat, and this enabled him to keep fighters on the ground at the ready for the next wave of German bombers. Radar completely demolished the German element of surprise and gave it to the RAF.

The advantage of radar combined with the excellent climbing characteristics of the Hurricane and Spitfire allowed the British the comfort of being not only in the right spot to intercept, but also at the proper altitude or, if they were lucky, higher. British response tactics were modified by Douglas Bader and Trafford Leigh-Mallory to accommodate the Big Wing theory, which inflicted heavy casualties on the Luftwaffe. Eventually this tactic was adopted as official doctrine.

The Battle of Britain illustrated flaws in the German system and strengths in that of the British, who adapted when they had to. The RAF's tactical rigidity, which was eventually corrected, was helped by its tremendous strategic pliability. The British were able to adjust on the fly to the conditions presented by each German raid.

The greatest British deficiency was tactical inadequacy, which was overcome with the adoption of Finger Four and Big Wing by the RAF. For the Germans, initial tactical superiority gave the Luftwaffe an edge early in the battle, but strategic flexibility allowed the RAF to survive—its very existence thwarting the German plan. □

First-time contributor Grant Matla writes from his home in Batavia, New York. He is a college professor and enjoys a variety of sports.

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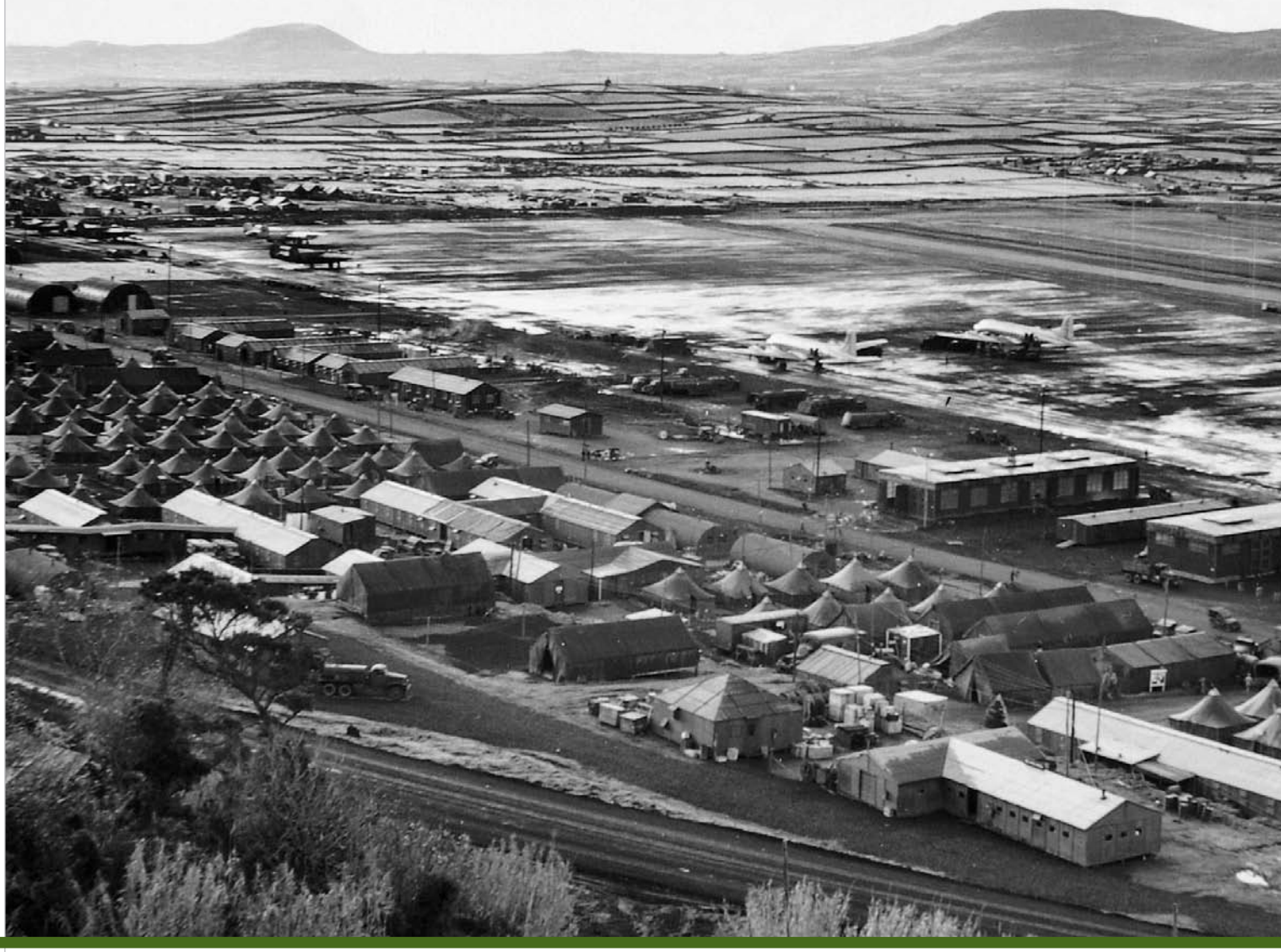
Covering the

Both the Allies and the Axis sought to control the strategically located Azores during World War II.

The year 1944 dawned with America already at war for over two years. In an event not marked by history books, the 96th Navy Construction Battalion, Seabees, crossed the Atlantic from Davisville, Rhode Island, on the *Abraham Lincoln,* a converted banana boat escorted by two destroyers, the USS *Ellis* and USS *Biddle*.

Three days later, on January 4, the 928th Engineer Aviation Regiment left Hampton Roads, Virginia, in three ships, the Liberty ship *John Clarke* and LSTs *44* and *228,* as part of convoy UGS-29 officially headed to the Mediterranean. In the records of the 10th Fleet the ship movement card for the *John Clarke* shows departure from Hampton Roads on January 5, 1944, due Gibraltar January 22. Gibraltar is crossed out and Terceira is written on the line below with an expected arrival date of January 17.

Apparently, not even the captain of the *John Clarke* knew he was going to the Azores until his ship was well out to sea. Each outfit was equally ignorant of where it was going and of



BY NORMAN HERZ

Azores Gap

the other's existence, but they were soon to join up on a secret mission—Operation Alacrity—planned in meetings in Casablanca, Canada, and Washington by the Allied chiefs of staff with the collaboration of their leaders, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Both the Axis and the Allies wanted to get the Azores first, and each had their own ideas on how to do it. Operation Alacrity was Churchill's; Roosevelt had Task Force Gray and Operation Lifebelt, and Operation Felix/Projekt Amerika was Hitler's. Each side probably knew of the other's plans, and each had the same goal in mind: to occupy the strategically located Azores archipelago by fair means or foul, by diplomacy, intimidation, or outright armed invasion.

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Controlling the islands with their strategic position in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean meant for the Allies protecting the important convoy routes of the central Atlantic. Failing to control them left a giant "black hole" in the Azores Gap for convoys headed to the Mediterranean and the United Kingdom, a gauntlet with waiting U-boat wolfpacks, an unhappy shooting gallery of Allied troop and supply ships. If an invasion of Europe was to take place, the Azores Gap had to have air cover. Only an Allied airfield in the mid-Atlantic could provide that cover.

The Azores, a group of nine volcanic islands belonging to Portugal and lying in the central Atlantic, cover an area of 910 square miles (2,355 square km), or slightly less than Rhode Island. They stretch over 373 miles (600 km) from Corvo in the northwest to Santa Maria in the southeast, with Santa Maria closest to Europe, about 930 miles (1,500 km) from Lisbon. Flores, the farthest and considered the westernmost point of Europe, is 1,100 miles (1,770 km) from Labrador and 2,240 miles (3,600 km) from the East Coast of the United States. Even before America's entry into the war, President Roosevelt thought he could justify American intervention in the Azores by calling them easternmost North America and thus falling under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine.

For Germany, the Azores represented a base for U-boat operations plus air bases needed for Projekt Amerika, a Luftwaffe bombing campaign of America's East Coast cities. With a base for provisioning in the middle of the Atlantic, U-boats would not waste so many days and precious diesel fuel sailing out of and returning to their pens in France. Their time in action would become almost unlimited.

A problem for all these schemes was that Portugal, a strict neutral, had no desire to get involved in a conflict between the great powers, firmly believing that when an elephant sneezes a mouse dies of pneumonia. To stay out of the war, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio de Oliveira Salazar did not want either side to use his territory as a base for offensive operations.

The Allies agreed on one thing. World War II would not be lost on any land battlefield but

LEFT: On December 29, 1944, Lagens Field in the Azores is a bustling Allied base of operations. Control of the Azores gave the Allies the edge in combating the German U-boat menace in the Atlantic. TOP: The old and the new coexist at Lagens Field in the Azores as Portuguese ox carts, heavily laden with the belongings of islanders, pass by the Royal Air Force Command staging post, which coordinated Allied air operations.

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ABOVE: The Allied investment of men and matériel is apparent in this aerial view of Lagens Field on the island of Terciera in the Azores group. OPPOSITE: A Vickers Warwick antisubmarine aircraft of Royal Air Force Squadron No. 269 flies above Lagens Field.

might be in the ship graveyard of the North Atlantic. Churchill wrote, "The U-boat attack was our worst evil. It would have been wise for the Germans to stake all upon it."

U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull said, "Our whole democratic civilization twice hung by a thread during the recent war—once during the summer of 1940 after Dunkirk and the fall of France, when Britain even with her Navy might have failed to repulse a full-scale German attack across the Channel, and again during 1942, when German submarines were sinking three Allied merchant vessels for every one constructed."

In 1941, Admiral Karl Dönitz's U-boat wolfpacks sank 2.1 million tons of shipping, while submarine production was increasing from 65 to 230 a month. Ships were destroyed faster than they could be replaced. Over 3.5 percent of the tanker fleet was lost each month. To win the war, the sea lanes had to be protected and that could be accomplished only by long-range bomber patrols flying from air bases on neutral territory around and in the Atlantic. For the northern sea routes, Denmark's Greenland and Iceland would provide that protection, and for the broad expanse of the central Atlantic, Portugal's Azores Islands were the only possibilities. The German wolfpacks had to be contained if American convoys were to bring their precious cargoes of men and matériel into the war.

The outlook for the free world in 1941 appeared bleak, but by 1943 the Allies had constructed airfields along the northern perimeter of the Atlantic in Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom so ships following an extreme northerly route had aerial protection.

The bases in Greenland were made possible by an agreement signed on April 10, 1941, between the United States and Henrik de Kauffmann, recognized as the legitimate Danish ambassador by Washington but not by Copenhagen, then under German occupation. Since the United States was not at war yet, Roosevelt called on the Monroe Doctrine to justify the action, loudly protested by Hitler as an outrageous violation of neutrality.

After Iceland declared its independence from Denmark on July 7, Roosevelt sent Naval Task Force 19 made up of the Marine Corps 1st Brigade accompanied by four battleships, 13 destroyers, and eight supply ships, or more than the entire German fleet in the Atlantic, to Iceland to relieve a small British force. Once again Hitler expressed dismay that a professed neutral could take such belligerent actions. German newspapers howled, "Invasion of Iceland; Roosevelt provokes war; Arm-in-arm with Bolshevik mass murderers; Roosevelt has irrevocably torn up the Monroe Doctrine."

Air bases were built, making the entire northern perimeter of the Atlantic more secure for Allied convoys, alleviating but not eliminating U-boat attacks on England- and Russia-bound convoys. Dönitz then moved his submarine patrols from the north to the Azores Gap where no protection was possible in the vast expanse between Bermuda and Gibraltar for ships headed to North Africa and the Mediterranean. Convoys sailing to Morocco, Tunisia, and Italy from the United States and tankers from Caribbean oil fields had to sail directly through the middle Atlantic without aerial protection.

There was no other recourse: an air base had to be established in the Azores Gap or convoys could continue to expect U-boat attacks. The four convoys—UGS 4, 5, 6, and 7—to sail from New York and Hampton Roads, Virginia, to the Mediterranean from January 13 to April 1, 1943, lost 13 ships with an aggregate tonnage of 83,500. To resolve the crisis, the Allies had to confront Portugal and convince the country that cooperation was in its best interests, especially since eventually Portugal would need help recovering East Timor, its East Indies colony, from the Japanese.

However, Prime Minister Salazar was justifiably frightened by the threat of a German "protective occupation" of his country if he allowed the Allies to build an air base in the Azores. It was obvious to him as well as to the combined chiefs of staff that if the Germans invaded Portugal overland from Spain there was not a solitary thing the Allies could do to help the small, underequipped Portuguese armed forces.

While the Allied leaders were working out a strategy for the Azores, Hitler was formulating plans for world conquest. After the blitzkrieg through Poland, France, and the Low Countries, the next step was to be the invasion of England, but after the RAF shot the Luftwaffe out of the sky in the summer of 1940, that operation was aborted.

Debate in the German high command then narrowed to two choices for the next campaign, Operation Barbarossa against Russia or Operation Felix, the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula—crossing Spain to seize Gibraltar and Portugal, then North Africa and the Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic islands. Hitler chose Barbarossa but promised the admirals that the defeat of Russia would take only a few months, after which attention would be turned to Felix.

D-day for Operation Felix was to be January 10, 1942. German bases in the Azores would provide, first, a port for U-boat support and, second, an airfield to base the new Messerschmitt long-range bomber, the Me-264 Amerika. The plane carried a 4,000-pound bomb load with a 12,600 km (9,000 mile) operational range, far enough to attack northeastern American cities from Boston to Washington and return.

Operation Felix must have been known to the Allies as well as to Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain, who was kept well informed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr, German military intelligence, and an avowed anti-Nazi. Salazar also must have been

told of the German plans by Franco, which surely gave him many sleepless nights and weighed heavily in all his decisions. If he gave in to the Allied demand for bases in the Azores, Hitler would go ahead with Felix and invade the Portuguese homeland.

Despite Portugal's refusal, in August 1941, even before America entered the war, Churchill and Roosevelt decided at the historic Newfoundland Conference to build an air base in the Azores by any means, including armed invasion. Approved at the conference, Operation Pilgrim would neutralize German threats to Atlantic shipping and the Iberian Peninsula. The British would seize the Canary Islands, and the Americans would provide "protective occupation" of the Azores. American justification for such action as an allegedly neutral power was the Monroe Doctrine, which Roosevelt invoked after placing the Azores firmly in the Western Hemisphere, a move deplored by his geographers.

In May 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill met in Washington to discuss war strategy. The decision was made to occupy the Azores with or without the permission of Portugal. The operation was supposed to be accomplished as delicately as possible.

General Hastings Ismay, an adviser to Churchill, reported, "The Combined Chiefs of Staff had no difficulty in reaching agreement on a number of points, such as the prosecution of the U-boat war, the bombing of Germany, and the occupation of the Azores. The last-named was a delicate problem. Both the Americans and ourselves were anxious to have a base on that island [*sic*] for operating the long-range aircraft which were employed in giving cover to our convoys and dealing with the U-boats, but there seemed little hope that Portugal would grant this concession of her own free will. It was therefore agreed that the British should mount a small expedition to capture the island at an early date, it being understood that this must be done without the use of violence. It is easy for high authority to make that sort of stipulation, but the unfortunate commander may easily find his attempts at seduction are unavailing and be compelled to have recourse to rape."

The British 247th Air Group, the American 928th Engineer Aviation Regiment, and the 96th Naval Construction Battalion (Seabees) were charged with accomplishing the task.

Cooler heads convinced Churchill to exhaust diplomatic approaches before going ahead with an armed invasion. Their strategy was to call upon the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1373 for "mutual friendship and defense" signed by Edward III, King of England and France, and Don Fernando, King of Portugal, and Queen Eleanor to argue the case for an Allied base. The Windsor Treaty, the oldest of its kind still in effect between any two nations today, called for either party to aid the other in case of war as long as such assistance could be provided without great injury to the signatory's country. It had been invoked several times in the past, notably during the Peninsular Wars, when Napoleon invaded Portugal and Spain only to be defeated by a British army under the Duke of Wellington, and earlier during Elizabethan times when British "retribution pirates" attacked Spanish galleons returning from the New World ostensibly to avenge Spain's seizing the throne of Portugal in 1570.

On October 12, 1943, Churchill revealed to the House of Commons that he had called upon the Windsor Treaty of Eternal Alliance with Portugal to authorize an operation to protect the Azores. The treaty, said Churchill, was invoked with the approval of Salazar, and Operation Alacrity was beginning. Churchill relished every moment of the historic event, taking great pleasure in springing on a surprised Parliament a treaty that few even knew existed and talking of places of which none had ever heard.

To preserve the secrecy of the operation, a newly formed task force, the 247th RAF Air Group commanded by Air Vice Marshal G.R. Bromet, sailed in three small convoys from Liverpool on September 30, arriving on the island of Terceira in the Azores on October 8, four days before Churchill made his startling revelation to Parliament. The task force numbering some 3,000 officers and enlisted men drawn from the Army Sappers (Royal Engineers), RAF, and Royal Navy immediately began construction of the air base.

The British worked quickly to construct a temporary airstrip. Normally 60,000 pierced plank steel mats were linked together to form an all-weather surface 5,000 feet long by 150 feet wide, adequate to serve as an advance runway for most tactical operations. However, this was not to be an advance runway but a full-fledged airfield that expected heavy use from transport and bomber aircraft, so a 6,000-foot-long runway was constructed at Lagens Field. On November 9, the first kill was registered when a surprised *U-707* was sunk by an RAF bomber based at the new field.

Admiral Dönitz's submarine fleet had been using the Azores for provisioning. Years before the war, German intelligence had organized a worldwide naval supply service, the Etappendienst, designed to serve the warships they planned to keep at sea in the coming conflict. One of the principal stations of the network was in the port of Horta on the island of Faial in the Azores, where agents were ostensibly working for a German shipping line whose cargo business had dried up during the war. With the Azores interdicted by the new RAF airbase, another spot for the U-boats to ren-

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AMERICAN ENGINEERING KNOW-HOW WAS NEEDED TO BUILD AN AIRFIELD CAPABLE OF HANDLING THE HEAVY TRAFFIC EXPECTED FOR THE COMING LIBERATION OF EUROPE ...

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ABOVE: The British hospital at Lagens Field is seen in the background, while a church built by the inhabitants of the island of Terciera lies in the foreground of this photo taken in December 1944. TOP: This staged publicity photo supposedly depicts the commander of a Boeing Flying Fortress Mark II aircraft of Coastal Command holding a final briefing prior to takeoff from Lagens Field. In front of the Mark II, FL462 "W" of No. 220 Squadron RAF, the "crewmen" were actually an ad hoc group drawn from No. 206 Squadron RAF, and the "captain" (third from right, wearing SD Cap) was Flying Officer L. W. Taylor, Royal Australian Air Force, an Air Ministry public relations officer.

dezvous was desperately needed, but with the Atlantic now covered by Allied patrols that would prove impossible.

At the Washington Conference, the Allies had agreed that the British would enter the Azores first, to be followed in two weeks by American forces. The British might come in under the 1373 treaty, and the Americans would follow according to the provision in the treaty that Britain and Portugal would be "friends to friends." American engineering know-how was needed to build an airfield capable of handling the heavy traffic expected for the coming liberation of Europe and, more immediately, for increased submarine patrols by long-range bombers.

As reasonable as these arguments appeared to the Allies, Salazar was not buying any of them. America was not a signatory to the 1373 treaty, so he had no excuse of diplomatic necessity to fall back on if the Germans pressed him to explain this action. Even though there was almost no chance of an attack—German troops had been driven out of North Africa and were on the defensive in Italy and Russia—the Portuguese dictator was still fearful of some kind of retribution by Hitler. Unrestricted submarine warfare against Portuguese merchant ships or aerial bombardment of its cities were both still possibilities.

Salazar threatened to forcefully resist any landing of American troops in the Azores but was convinced only hours before the Seabees showed up to accept the fact that they were coming with or without his permission. Negotiations had continued into the early morning hours in Lisbon, with cables flying between London and Washington. The talks ended shortly before the Seabees arrived at 9 AM on January 9, accompanied by two destroyers with enough firepower to overwhelm anything on the island.

The most delicate negotiations probably took place on Terceira where the Seabees were hoping to land. The Portuguese commander, Brigadier Tamagnini Barbosa, had orders from Salazar, which had not been rescinded as far as he knew, to resist any "American invasion." Bromet convinced Barbosa that the Americans would be under British command and so should be considered part of the British forces on the island. The Portuguese troops stayed in their barracks, and the critical American contribution to Operation Alacrity began.

The American engineers landed a week later without the threat of resistance but unfortunately accompanied by a storm, which snapped an anchor chain and drove their landing ship onto a rocky beach. Equipment and supplies were ruined and had to be replenished in a subsequent convoy.

The American forces built up the port facilities, including services for offloading aviation fuel; constructed all-weather runways, roads, buildings, and water and fuel storage tanks; and generally made sure that Lagens Field was ready to handle any increased air traffic. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were pleased with the rapid progress and that the field was fully operational in a short period of time. However, there was

no distinctly American airfield in the Azores.

Another airfield was needed for two salient reasons. First, Lagens was shared with the British who were the official landlords of the base, and, second, a backup base would be required for the heavier traffic expected for the invasion of Europe and to speed traffic to the Pacific Theater. Negotiations were intense with Salazar to obtain such a base and resulted in a compromise: the Americans could construct a civilian field ostensibly run by Pan American World Airways primarily for civilian use. It would be turned over to Portugal at the end of the war.

Before an agreement was reached, a team of engineers from the 928th was assembled at Lagens to start the survey work. It was obvious that both time and the patience of the Joint Chiefs had run out; an American air base would be built no matter what the diplomats did. Passports were issued identifying the men as engineers employed by Pan American World Airways, and the team was to travel to the island of Santa Maria to start building the American airfield.

A briefing team from U.S. Army Intelligence was flown to the Azores from Washington. Team members warned the engineers to strictly maintain their civilian cover, and they cautioned that if they were discovered to be American military the Portuguese could consider them spies.

In August 1944 the team sailed aboard a Portuguese inter-island ferry of the Imprêsa Insulana de Navigação from Terceira to Santa Maria. The engineers, with construction by local labor, laid out a temporary earthen emergency landing strip in a matter of weeks. A planned permanent 11,000-foot airstrip, which was to be the longest in the Atlantic Ocean, and structures necessary for the airfield were staked out. The actual building of the airfield would theoretically take place when Salazar gave his approval. On November 28, soon after approval was granted, the Santa Maria air base became legal as well as fully operational.

National Archives

Wounded men lie near the runway at Lagens Field and await transport from the Azores to hospitals in the United States. The transport aircraft shown in the background is the Curtiss-Wright C-46 Commando.

During the summer of 1945, more than 450 heavy bombers flew to the United States via Santa Maria and the Azores route for reassignment to the Pacific Theater. After the successful conclusion of the mission to Santa Maria, Brig. Gen. Cyrus R. Smith, who led Military Air Transport Command, commended the enlisted men involved and appointed several to Officer Candidate School. Preserving the secrecy of the mission, the author's commendation reads, "He at all times performed assignments willingly and in a superior manner. His attitude, efficiency, conduct and bearing, both while working and in contacts with the local populace, tended toward the success of this detail."

Lagens Field, now called Lajes, has become an important link in the defense networks of the United States and NATO. It has seen service in many overseas operations beginning in the Cold War with the Berlin Airlift and including the Persian Gulf.

Although Operation Alacrity is conspicuously missing from official and unofficial histories of World War II, the Azores Islands clearly played a key role in winning the war in the Atlantic. The final "Report of the United States Naval Facilities in the Azores" states, "Allied acquisition of the Azores as a base was a decisive blow against German submarine warfare. This little cluster of Portuguese islands, two thirds of the way between our east coast ports and Gibraltar, when coupled with Bermuda and Newfoundland, put the North Atlantic convoy route within range of land-based bomber protection over the entire transoceanic journey.... Land-based planes in anti-submarine warfare were ... menaced only by opposing aviation ... and most important of all, the number of planes that could be sent into the air from our new mid-ocean landing field far exceeded that which could be sent up from any carrier group."

The secrecy surrounding Alacrity was pervasive and long-lived. The authoritative history of the Army Air Forces in World War II cites the role played by each Aviation Engineer regiment, but without even a hint of the existence of the 928th.

A visit to the historian of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shed no more light but was very revealing for what was not there. In the files at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, *The Narrative History of the 928th Engineer Aviation Regiment* begins, "The unit having completed its overseas mission returned to the United States 10 March 1945 ... for 30-day recuperation leave and furlough while en route from the Port of Entry (Hampton Roads, Virginia), to Geiger Field, Washington."

There is no mention of what "its overseas mission" had been, not a hint of where it was or why, but it was clear that the mission was too secret to entrust to the Corps of Engineers historian. Records of Operation Alacrity buried away in the Seabee historians office in Port Hueneme, California, and the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, were declassified 20 to 30 years after the end of World War II.

The mysterious "overseas mission" of the 928th Engineers was also documented in five large boxes in the files of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and two boxes of State Department records. They contain enough information to piece together the story of the Azores bases. Finally revealed were the high-level military decisions and diplomatic maneuvering and the adventures, misadventures, and accomplishments that led to the Allied mission to the Azores. Now, finally, the complete story of Operation Alacrity could be told. □

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Breaking the Nazi *Stranglehold*

Soviet Operation Spark relieved the beseiged city of Leningrad.

BY LUDWIG HEINRICH DYCK

With the German Sixth Army in its death throes at Stalingrad in January 1943, Stavka, the Soviet High Command, sought to capitalize on the disaster by unleashing massive offensives along the entire German-Soviet front. Although eclipsed by the gargantuan operations that followed against the German Army Groups Center and South, the fighting was no less fierce in the north.

Since September 8, 1941, Leningrad lay besieged by Field Marshal Georg von Küchler's Army Group North and by Germany's Finnish allies. Of Leningrad's prewar population of nearly three million, 637,000 remained in the bombed city; the rest had been evacuated or had succumbed to the siege. At least the worst days of starvation had passed, alleviated by summer gardens of cabbages and potatoes. Nevertheless, the city remained in deadly danger.

Five previous attempts to break the blockade in 1941 and 1942 had resulted in costly Soviet defeats. German artillery shells continued to rain onto Leningrad and only the "Road of Life," the supply line across frozen Lake Ladoga, enabled supplies and reinforcements to reach the city. However, the Germans remained too weak to capture the city by direct assault.

Lieutenant General Leonid A. Govorov's Leningrad Front staunchly continued to defend Leningrad and hold onto a bridgehead at Oranienbaum, bordering the Gulf of Finland to the west. To the east, Hero of the Soviet Union General Kirill A. Meretskov stood ready to lead his Volkhov Front in a renewed breakthrough attempt to Leningrad and to Govorov's front. On Meretskov's left flank, General Filipp N. Starikov's Eighth Army stood by for additional support. Now, like never before, there was a real chance that the ring around Leningrad could finally be burst open. It was Govorov who figured out just how it could be done.

Govorov's Operation Iskra, or Spark, sought to secure a land bridge to Leningrad from the east. To do this Govorov had to overcome the German divisions in the Shlisselburg-Siniavino corridor. Shlisselburg literally meant "key fortress," as named by Peter the Great, who realized that the fortress town was the key to the Ingra, the name of the region to the south of Lake Ladoga. Now, over 200 years later, Shlisselburg and the land to its east and south were keys to the relief of Leningrad. The Shlisselburg corridor blocked the linkup between the Leningrad and the Volkhov Fronts and was a base for future German attacks against Leningrad and against the Road of Life. The corridor stretched south from the shores of Lake Ladoga between Shlisselburg to the west and Lipka to the east. Roughly eight miles wide at the north, the corridor began to widen, like a bottleneck, in a southward direction for six miles. At that point the commanding heights of Siniavino rose from the forested bog.

Govorov planned the attack in detail. The Leningrad Front's Sixty-seventh Army would attack the Shlisselburg-Siniavino corridor from the west while the Volkhov Front's Second Shock Army and the Eighth Army would attack from the east. Govorov received an additional rifle division, five rifle brigades, and an antiaircraft artillery division, while Meretskov's front was strengthened by five rifle divisions. Both fronts also received numerous additional mortar, tank, and artillery regiments and battalions. To make sure that the attack would succeed, Govorov amassed three times as many artillery pieces than had been used in the failed attacks of 1941-1942.

Govorov's Sixty-seventh Army was commanded by General Mikhail P. Dukhanov, one of the Soviet Union's best commanders. Meretskov's Second Shock Army was led by Lt. Gen. Vladimir Z. Romanovskii. In addition to the regular troops, 10 partisan detachments were supplied with 2,000 rifles, hundreds of machine guns, and thousands of pounds of explosives to create havoc in the German rear. Senior Soviet commander Marshal Georgi Zhukov flew in at the last minute to coordinate Spark.

In contrast to the Soviet fronts, Küchler's Army Group North was weakened by having

A dead German lies in the foreground as Red Army troops storm an enemy strongpoint south of Lake Ladoga on November 1, 1943. Operation Spark finally facilitated the breaking of the 900-day siege of Leningrad.

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to give up divisions that were even more desperately needed in the southern and central Russian sectors. Küchler lost the Eleventh Army and a further nine divisions from the Eighteenth Army. Despite this, Küchler expected the Eighteenth Army to continue to besiege Leningrad from the southwest, south, and southeast. At the same time, the Eighteenth Army had to prevent a breakout from the Oranienbaum bridgehead and block any relief by the Volkhov Front.

The Eighteenth Army was commanded by Col. Gen. Georg Lindemann, a Prussian officer and battle-hardened veteran of World War I and a holder of the Knight's Cross. Well aware of his army's vital task, Lindemann prepared his troops with the words, "As the source of the Bolshevik Revolution, as the city of Lenin, it is the second capital of the Soviets.... For the Soviet regime the liberation of Leningrad would equal the defense of Moscow, the battle for Stalingrad."

To prevent this liberation, Lindemann naturally made sure his strongest defenses were in the Shlisselburg-Siniavino corridor. Here, the XXVI Corps's 1st, 227th, and 170th Infantry Divisions and the LIV Corps's SS Police Division and parts of the 5th Mountain Division waited in their earthen dugouts and trenches in three defensive belts amid forested, frozen swamps and stone villages. Three regiments of the 96th Infantry Division stood by as reserve at Mga. Despite their strong positions, Lindemann's forces were stretched so thinly that the average divisional frontage was over 10 miles long.

Govorov and Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, a member of the Defense Committee, walked behind a T-34 testing the ice of the River Neva. Suddenly the tank slid out of control, and the ice cracked in all directions. As the metal giant plunged into the river, Voroshilov nearly fell in as well. Govorov reacted instantaneously, quickly grabbing Voroshilov and yanking him back. The tank driver managed to swim out of the tank and save himself. The weakness of the ice convinced Govorov to postpone the attack from December 27 to January 12th. In the meantime, he ordered the Sixty-seventh Army to carry out full simulations to prepare the troops.

Meanwhile, Soviet engineer, sapper, and pontoon battalions readied the front for Spark. Trench lines were dug to protect the movement of troops to the jumping-off points, new observation posts were laid out, gun covers built and camouflaged. Bridges over streams and miles of roads were laid down. Engineer companies cleared whole minefields, and Soviet intelligence gathered photographs of enemy positions. The Soviets had a fairly clear picture of the German defense while Soviet security itself had remained tight. The Germans, although aware of Soviet objectives, could not foresee the exact day the attack would happen.

During the night of January 11, Soviet bombers dropped their loads on selected German positions within the corridor. A predawn bone-chilling wind blew across the frozen Neva. With the 170th Infantry Division just outside Gorodok hospital, a Lieutenant Winacker walked down a trench. The landscape was quieter than usual. From behind his MG-42, a gunner remarked, "I don't like the look of it. Not a single Ivan in sight. Normally they scuttle about ... dragging their soup and bread into their positions." From the high bank of the riverside, Winacker swept the ice of the Neva with his binoculars. He cursed; there were

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On September 2, 1943, German soldiers, camouflaged against the snow, which already blankets the ground, move forward. Alert to the potential Soviet offensive that was to come, the Germans took a heavy toll in Russian casualties, both military and civilian.

footsteps in the snow below the bank. At night Soviet engineers had opened a path through the minefields! Suddenly, the ground shook and the sky trembled with a monstrous roar. Instinctively Winacker threw his body into the side of the trench. Above him, frozen earth and steel fragments hurtled through the air.

At 9:30 AM, on January 12, 1943, Govorov and Merestkov opened Operation Spark, the first phase of the Second Battle of Lake Ladoga, with the thunder of 4,500 artillery pieces. One gun was positioned for every 20 feet of front line. On top of the artillery, the heavy naval guns of the Red Fleet in Leningrad harbor joined in the bombardment.

Bridges, buildings, trenches, and trees exploded and collapsed in showers of steel, earth, and wood. Deep in his dugout, a German soldier grimly remarked, "They aren't joking this time."

Over two hours later the barrage ended with an earsplitting Katyusha rocket barrage. Then ground attack aircraft from the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Air Armies droned overhead, bombing German strongpoints at Poselok (Workers Settlements) Nos. 4, 5, and 7 and at Siniavino. The Soviet first-echelon divisions advanced behind their artillery barrage. Four divisions attacked the Shlisselburg-Siniavino bottleneck from the west, and five attacked from the east.

As the artillery barrage moved farther inland, German soldiers shook off dirt, bandaged wounds, or dug themselves out of piles of dirt. On the southern flank of Dukhanov's Sixty-seventh Army, the Soviet 45th Guards Rifle Division launched Spark through a bridgehead already on the German side of the River Neva. There the 46th Guards Rifle Division's trench lines were so close to the German trenches that the two merged into each other. Machine guns blazed, grenades were hurled through the air, and entrenching tools and bayonets stabbed and hacked as the Germans repulsed the 45th Guards Rifle Division in close combat.

At Shlisselburg on the northern flank the Soviets never got to within bayonet range. The assaults of the 86th Rifle Division withered in the devastating fire of the German 227th Infantry Division, which left the ice littered with Soviet bodies.

In the center of Dukhanov's front, at Gorodok and Marino, the 170th Infantry Division landsers scrambled to their positions as fast as they could. In awe they beheld the massed regiments of the Soviet 136th and 268th Rifle Divisions charging across the frozen Neva. At Gorodok the German field howitzers and mortars roared into the Soviet masses, hurling chunks of ice and flesh through the air and then moving inland to target further assault waves. The Soviets had no cover, with their cry of "Urra" they charged on or died. Only a few of the first wave made it to the German side of the river, where they threw themselves onto the ground for cover or battered their way forward.

At Marino, beneath the thick concrete roof of the power station, a 170th Infantry Division machine gunner cautioned, "Wait for it. Let them get nice and close," before his MG-42 mowed the Soviets down like a giant scythe. The first wave of Soviets was devastated, dead, or dying on the ice, but behind it came a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth wave. The last broke through the German defense but only after 3,000 Soviets had died or lay wounded on the ice. Govorov and Dukhanov lost no time in exploiting the penetration. By the evening of the first day, the Soviet 136th and 268th Rifle Divisions had driven a wedge three miles wide and two miles deep into the German defensive belt between Shlisselburg and Gorodok. By 6 PM Soviet sappers had laid bridges north and south of Marino. Soon the bridges trembled under the wide tracks of T-34 medium tanks. German intelligence reported four Soviet rifle divisions and one tank brigade at Marino. One of these was the 86th Rifle Division that, after its failure at Shlisselburg, followed the 136th Rifle Division through the Marino gap.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Colonel General Georg Lindemann, a Prussian, commanded the German Eighteenth Army at Leningrad. TOP: Lieutenant General Leonid A. Govorov commanded the Leningrad Front and stubbornly defended a crucial bridgehead.

To the east, the attack by Meretskov on January 12 fared similarly to that by Govorov. Here, too, the Germans firmly clung to their strongholds but likewise could not prevent Romanovskii's Second Shock Army from slowly penetrating around their flanks. Romanovskii deployed most of his armor on his left flank supported by Second Army shock troops and assault groups from two divisions of Starikov's Eighth Army. An iron fist was poised to smash its way through Kruglaia Grove, Poselok No. 8, and Gaitolova. Dukhanov aimed for the vital Siniavino Heights, but initially only Kruglaia Grove was captured by 327th Rifle Division infantry supported by tanks. Everywhere else the German defense held.

At Gaitolova, Sergeant Franz Juschkat of the German XXVI Corps' 1st Infantry Division awoke with sand dribbling into his mouth. His whole bunker rocked. Juschkat jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "This is it; Ivan has begun his attack." A moment later Juschkat was outside scanning a cloud of smoke that rose from a horizon pulsing with intense artillery flashes that grew brighter and bigger. After two hours the artillery moved closer, toward Juschkat's platoon's reserve position.

Now the German artillery responded but it did not silence the Soviet barrage, which crashed upon the German reserve position for half an hour. It then moved on toward the German artillery positions. Juschkat and his platoon crawled out of their bunker. Thirty feet away a neighboring platoon's position had been leveled. All 12 men who had held the position were dead. Juschkat gave the order, "Prepare to move out." The platoon spread out as Juschkat led his 25 men forward. Smoke obscured the way ahead.

Soviets came running toward them. Both sides threw themselves to the ground. Machine guns rattled. The Soviets had broken 600 yards into the German main line of resistance. Juschkat rose up, "1st and 2nd Squads attack with me! Up—Move out!" Covered by the rapid fire of the platoon's MG-42, Juschkat led his men into the enemy fire. Bullets zipped past him as he dodged side to side. The Soviets were frantically setting up their own machine gun. Juschkat fired his submachine gun from the hip. The Soviets were overrun, killed, or sent to the rear as prisoners. But there were more Soviets ahead and with them were T-34s.

Before the day ended Juschkat would retake a bunker, blow up a T-34 by throwing a grenade into the open hatch, and rescue a comrade whose leg had been reduced to a bloody stump. Papa Juschkat, as his men would come to call him, would go on to earn the Knight's Cross at Lake Ladoga. His heroic resistance was indicative of the 1st Infantry Division's repeated counterattacks. The division's East Prussians utterly thwarted any breakthrough by the 376th Rifle Division of the Second Shock Army and by the 80th and 256th Rifle Divisions and 73rd Naval Brigade of the Eighth Army.

It was obvious to the commander of 26th Corps, General Carl Hilpert, that his divisions were in dire need of reinforcements. Army commander Lindemann agreed, but the only reinforcements available were three regiments of the 96th Infantry Division stationed at Mga, a combat group from the 5th Mountain Division, and some limited panzer and artillery support. Late on January 12, the 96th Division's 284th regiment with four Tigers and nine Mark IIIs of 1st Company, Heavy Panzer Battalion 502, struck toward the Scheidies forest to prevent a Soviet outflanking maneuver to the east of Gorodok.

Gorodok in turn received the 283rd Regiment of the 96th Infantry Division along with a battery of the 36th Flak Regiment and a battery of 150mm howitzers. The two regiments of the 96th would become embroiled with the 268th and the 136th Rifle Divisions, supported by armor of the 61st Tank Brigade. On the extreme southern end of the western flank, the 5th Mountain Division reinforced the German lines at Moskovkaia-Dubrovka. The third 96th Infantry Division regiment, the 287th, was sent to the eastern flank of the battle to help out the hard-pressed 227th Infantry Division at Poselok No. 1.

During the night of January 12, grenadiers of the 284th Regiment forced their way forward through the deep snow and gloomy thickets of the Scheidies forest. The men cursed; at times the snow came up to their chests. The crash of a Soviet 76.2mm antitank gun broke the still of the night. Salvos of the Katyushas, nicknamed Stalin's organs, howled in their direction.

Soviet machine guns opened up from the forest, and tracers flashed through the dark. A staff sergeant named Grueninger threw himself to the ground and crawled forward, leading his platoon. With a burst of his submachine gun, one of Grueninger's men cut down a Soviet creeping up on the platoon's right. At this point the machine-gun flashes were only 30 feet away. Hidden behind a snowdrift, Grueninger lobbed in three grenades. Grueninger and his platoon charged to finish the surviving Soviets. Victory seemed theirs, but then a shout froze the German soldiers' blood, "Tanks up front!"

The dawn of January 13 rose over the snow-covered, frozen bog upon which 24 T-34 medium and T-60 light tanks of the 61st Tank Brigade rumbled toward the forest. Their cannon thundered; their rounds ripped apart tree tops. Branches, pieces of wood, and steel fragments hurtled through the air. The MG-42s turned their attention to the Soviet infantry that advanced beside the incoming tanks. Using the cover of a snowdrift, two grenadiers outflanked a T-34. They threw their explosive charges under its overhanging turret and flung themselves into the snow. A tremendous explosion dislodged the turret. Despite such heroics, the T-34s nearly spelled the end of the German regiment. Three grenadier company commanders were already dead when the Tigers of Heavy Panzer Battalion 502 came to the rescue.

Small trees and saplings gave way to the tracks of the approaching four Tiger tanks. Although the Tiger had only recently made its combat debut, the Soviets were quick to learn that it was like no other tank they had faced before. The white-painted Tigers formed up in a wide wedge and, at the sight of the T-34s, opened fire. The Tigers rocked from the recoil of their deadly 88mm guns, leaving two T-34s in flames.

The Soviet tankers had to turn to face their most feared enemy. By the time they did so, two more T-34s were knocked out while the Tigers dispersed into cover. Company commander First Lieutenant Bodo von Gerdtell's Tiger rolled down into a defile and then heaved up on the other side. Gerdtell watched as a T-34 plowed through some undergrowth and swung its gun on another Tiger. "Achtung Schneider! Enemy to your right," called Gerdtell to his gunner who already had the T-34 in his sight. Schneider's round struck the T-34's right flank, blasting the turret.

That T-34 never got a chance to shoot, but another one had already singled out Gerdtell's Tiger, which shook from the impact of an armor-piercing round that had failed to penetrate. Schneider tried to fire back, but before he could do so another round crashed into the Tiger's gun mantelet. Schneider felt a long steel splinter penetrate his chest, mortally wounding him. His comrades carried him back to an infantry position while the tank duel concluded. After 12 tanks were lost, the remaining T-34s retreated. Gerdtell's Tiger was recovered, but as evening fell on January 13 the Soviets attacked again.

From his open turret hatch, platoon leader First Lieutenant Hans Bölter waved to Gerdtell. Bölter ordered his platoon of two Tigers to move out. One following the other, the two white behemoths rumbled into the twilight of January 13. Coming with them was a handful of light Mark III tanks. Bölter scanned the terrain from his hatch until the flash of an anti-tank gun persuaded him to duck inside. The Tiger turned and dipped into a depression. Inside, the crew braced themselves. Another round zoomed by a few meters to the right. The Tiger halted, and its gunner zeroed in on the antitank gun's muzzle flash. The 88mm round blew up the Soviet gun position, igniting its ammunition stockpile. The duel with the anti- tank gun was the prelude to a harrowing night battle.

It had become so dark that the Tigers lost sight of each other even though they were only a few hundred meters apart. Soviet soldiers watched the ominous, gigantic, white silhouette of the Tiger grind over the snow. The Soviets were nearly invisible, but Bölter caught sight of their shadowy movement through the Tiger's vision slit.

"Bow and turret machine guns open fire," ordered Bölter. Fire spit from the guns, flashing brightly on the snow and illuminating the Tiger's massive 88mm gun. Bölter peeked from his turret hatch as the second Tiger opened fire. The round zipped by Bölter's Tiger, almost hitting it. Ahead, another muzzle flashed in the night—a T-34 just 900 yards ahead. If any of the Soviet infantry survived the machine guns, Bölter would have to deal with them later. The Tiger came to a halt, and the gun swung and fired.

Instantly, a column of flame shot from the T-34's position. The white flames reflected off the steel of Bölter's Tiger, making him an easy target for another T-34. The ground exploded. Blinding light flashed into the vision slits. Bölter's Tiger sped up and slipped into the darkness. Gunner Bastian Gröschl applied some foot pressure to swing the turret around until the T-34 was in his crosshairs, and then he pushed the firing button. He scored another hit, but this time the 88mm round deflected off the T-34's sloped turret armor.

The T-34 fired again, another miss and its last chance. Gröschl's second shot hit between the turret and hull, the weak spot. The whole turret flipped into the air, and white flames shot from the hull. Two T-34s were down, but now more were moving in from the right and left. In the melee that followed, driver Hölzl deftly outmaneuvered the T-34s that were trying to outflank the Tigers.

Driving into a defile, Bölter's Tiger emerged on the other side to run into a T-34 that was less than 600 feet away. At such close range any hit would be a kill. Both tanks fired at the same time. The T-34 round missed by only a meter. Gröschl's round did not and turned the Soviet tank into a charred wreck. Another Soviet round shot out of the night, bouncing off the Tiger's thick frontal armor and jolting the whole crew inside. Gröschl replied and knocked out another T-34. Close by, the German grenadiers were fighting to regain their former positions.

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German soldiers pass one of scores of destroyed Red Army tanks near Leningrad. Although Russian losses in armor were severe, Soviet production capacity made good on their replacements.

Firing his submachine gun out of his turret, Bölter drove off a group of Soviet infantry. After this, the Tiger shook from three more antitank rounds, all of which failed to penetrate its armor. Gröschl went on to score his fifth tank kill of the night.

With so many losses, Soviet morale broke. The remaining T-34s fell back but continued to battle the pursuing Tigers. Bölter's Tiger heaved up out of another depression to spot a T-34 slipping into the cover of a forested area. Gröschl's round hit it in the rear, right in the fuel tanks. The flames of the burning tank reflected crimson on the snow. Bölter continued, hunting a seventh T-34 into the forest. After knocking it out he discovered his radio had broken down.

Suddenly, one after another, two rounds smacked into the Tiger. The smell of gasoline flooded the inside, and flames began to break out on the rear. "Get out!" yelled Hölzl. Everyone jumped out, Bölter landing right on top of a Soviet soldier. Instinctively, Bölter thrust his pistol into the Soviet's chest and pulled the trigger.

Bölter's pistol failed to fire. The Soviet soldier shouted something and ran away. From what Bölter could tell, the Soviet close assault team had pulled back so as not to get caught in the tank duel. In the confusion, Bölter lost his own men and ran into the night. Where was the other Tiger and where were the accompanying Mark IIIs? Soviet soldiers moved close by and shouted at him. Bölter pointed and turned his face away. In the night the Soviets had mistaken him for one of their own and moved off.

After fooling a second group of Soviets, even tailing along with them for a while, Bölter ran into the second Tiger. Its main gun and two machine guns opened up. Diving into a hole in the ground, Bölter barely managed to escape being killed by his own men. Finally, he crawled onto the Tiger's back to be greeted by its commander who pointed a pistol out of the turret hatch.

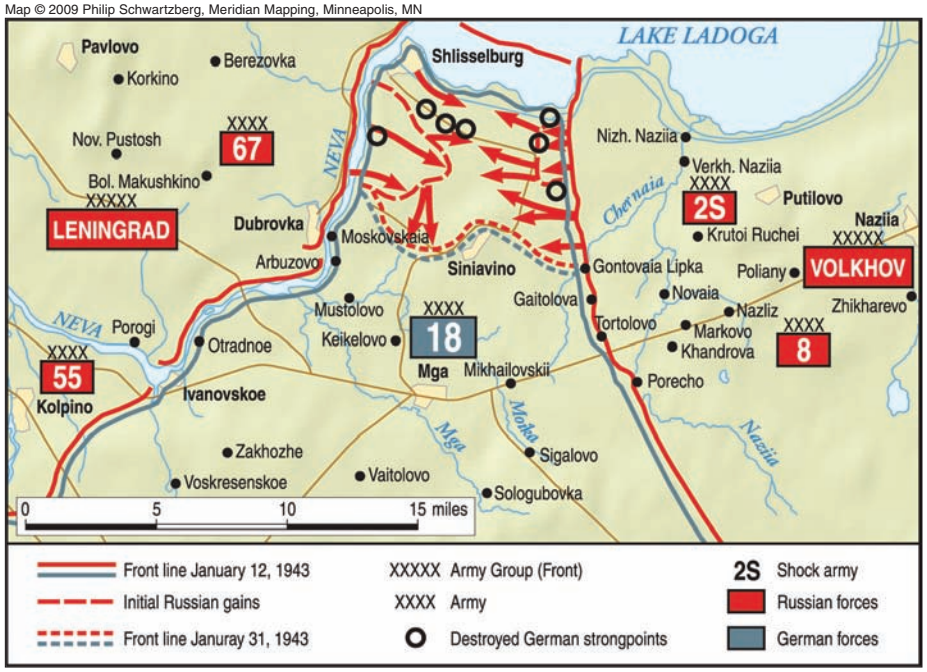
"It's me, Schutze!" called Bölter in the nick of time. When Bölter crawled inside, his first thoughts were of his comrades, "My crew must be somewhere nearby!" All four of them were soon found. It was only then that Bölter realized he had received four wounds from shell fragments when his own Tiger was knocked out. Against his objections, Bölter was sent to a field hospital.

Together with the Tigers and eight Mark III's, the grenadiers of the 284th Regiment had thrown back the Soviet penetration. Unfortunately, the defensive success was soured when 23 officers of the 284th Regiment were killed in a Soviet air raid on a command post.

At Gorodok, the entrenched 170th Infantry Division had continued to hold up the 268th Rifle Division. MG-42s and sniper rifles lurked inside the shattered windows of smoldering ruins. Two T-34s had their tracks blown off in a German minefield, eliciting cries of joy from the defenders. The reinforcements of the 96th Infantry Division's 283rd Regiment arrived just in time on January 12 to fight their way through the Soviet lines and entrench themselves at a Gorodok hospital.

During the morning of January 13, a force of 26 tanks of the 61st Tank Brigade overran the trenches of the 9th Company. The grenadiers held tight, their lives hanging in the balance. The shadow of the Soviet armor blocked out all light. The metal giants ground their tracks into the snow, attempting to bury

Map © 2009 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



the grenadiers alive, but it was so cold that the frozen earth refused to give way. When the Soviet infantry advanced in the wake of its tanks, the German foxholes unexpectedly came alive with a murderous fire.

Deprived of their accompanying infantry, the Soviet tanks continued to penetrate deeper into the German defense until they came under fire from a battery of the 36th Flak Regiment and nearby 150mm howitzers. Twenty-four tanks were destroyed in the ensuing artillery-versus-tank duel, halting the assault.

On the extreme southern flank of the battle on the River Neva in the Moskovskai-Dubrovka sector, the 5th Mountain Division boldly counterattacked on January 13 to drive the 268th Rifle Division back for more than a mile. Although the Germans fought hard and localized points held out, the Soviet assault slowly but surely clawed its way forward. South of Shlisselburg, the snowdrifts were marked by black shell holes. Cannon, machine guns, ammunition boxes, straw boots, and wagon wheels were among the litter of war.

The body of a young Soviet soldier lay dead in the snow. His hands still gripped his rifle. A white camouflage cape had been thrown over his face. Beside him, his helmet rested on a stick pushed into the ground. On the helmet was a piece of white paper, probably with the boy's name. He had been part of the 86th Rifle Division that advanced from south of Shlisselburg. The 86th Rifle Division fought its way toward Poselok No. 3 and Preobrazhenskoe Hill, where the 227th Infantry Division refused to give more ground. The hill was the main German strongpoint protecting the southern flank of Shlisselburg.

Meanwhile, the 136th Rifle Division supported by tanks of the 61st Tank Brigade pushed back the 96th Infantry Division to advance another mile eastward toward its objective, Poselok No. 5. The latter consisted of little more than a few huts and a small peat processing plant amid a frozen bog. However, Poselok No. 5 lay in the center of the Shlisselburg-Siniavino corridor and through it ran the only north-south road.

"The Germans had constructed a road through the marshes. It was an inferno and I found it hard to ignore the cries of the wounded echoing through the smoke and the trees."

While Govorov's divisions closed in on Poselok No. 5 from the west on the 13th, Meretskov's divisions were closing in on No. 5 from the east. The advance of the Soviet fronts was slowed by continuous German resistance. On the Volkhov Front, Lipka still held out but was almost encircled. Supported by artillery, a battalion of the 227th Infantry Division clung to Poselok No. 8, where it defied repeated assaults by the tough Siberian units of the 372nd Rifle Division.

The fresh Soviet 18th Rifle Division and the 98th Tank Brigade were ordered to outflank Poselok No. 8 from the south but could make little headway. Farther south, the German 227th Infantry Division, reinforced by a regiment of the 28th Jäger Division, continued to hold on to Poselok No. 7. At Kruglaia Grove, part of the Soviet gains were lost to a counterattack by the 1st Infantry Division. During the day, strong winds and heavy snowfall aided the Germans by bogging down tank assaults, making accurate artillery fire difficult and preventing Soviet air attacks.

From January 14 onward, the weather improved and with it returned the Soviet air attacks. The Soviets threw in the remainder of their second-echelon divisions. On the 15th, the last German reinforcements arrived, no more than two regiments of the 61st Infantry Division. The regimental groups were hurried up from Pogostye, 20 miles southeast of Mga, and fed into the bottleneck to defend Poselok No. 5. The same day, the 86th Rifle Division took Preobrazhenskoe Hill, which on January 16 proceeded to fight its way into Shlisselburg town.

Vicious street battles followed for the next two days, with the 227th Infantry Division slowly falling back and finally receiving orders to withdraw. Heavy Panzer Battalion 502 continued to be in the thick of the action, but it too was being worn down by attrition. On January 16, Gerdtell was killed in a night battle and the battalion commander was wounded. The casualties were worst among crews of the lightly armored Mark IIIs, which were supposed to support the Tigers. Seventeen of the 40 crewmen who manned the eight Mark IIIs were already dead.

In Govorov's center, it took four more days of intense fighting for the 136th Rifle Division and the 61st Tank Brigade to push forward another 1.6 miles to the western outskirts of Poselok No. 5. On that day, the 123rd Rifle Brigade captured Poselok No. 3 but was repulsed at Poselok Nos. 1 and 2. On the southern flank, although reinforced by the 13th Rifle Division, the 102nd Rifle Brigade, and the 142nd Naval Brigade, the 268th Rifle Division was unable to take Gorodok.

On the eastern side of the bottleneck, the Volkhov Front likewise sent more and more

units into battle: the 18th and the 71st Rifle Divisions and the 98th Tank Brigade on January 13 along with the 191st Rifle Division on the January 14. They were joined by the 239th and 11th Rifle Divisions, the 12th and 13th Ski Brigades, and the 122nd Tank Brigade over the next three days.

The piecemeal Soviet commitments and the unrelenting German resistance slowed but did not stop the Soviet advance. On January 14, Podgornyi Station fell to the 256th Rifle Division. On the morning of the 15th, a renewed assault by the 122nd Tank Brigade and the 372nd Rifle Division captured most of Poselok 8. Momentarily holding out behind the knocked-out hulls of Soviet tanks, a German battalion led by a Major Ziegler was all but done for. He had to break out that night. One hour before midnight, Ziegler led his grenadiers of the 227th Infantry Division out of Poselok No. 8. Rifles and bayonets held ready, a strong assault group led the way for wounded who were pulled on small, boat-shaped sleds called *akyas*.

Machine gunners guarded the flanks, and the rest of the battalion formed the rear. Ziegler looked into the black night sky; the stars of Orion were their guide southward. A Russian-speaking German got Ziegler's battalion through Soviet lines and helped Ziegler take 40 prisoners before his battalion reached friendly positions.

With Poselok No. 8 in its grasp, the 372nd Rifle Division pushed on to Poselok No. 1. Soviet forces from both fronts were now on the western and eastern outskirts of Poselok Nos. 1, 2, and 5, separated by only a mile. Stalin was pleased and on January 15 promoted Govorov to colonel general. On the night of January 16, the 18th Rifle Division stormed Poselok No. 5 three times. Intense fighting flared throughout the night, through bitter bone-chilling cold that dipped to 30 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

From along the railway embankments of the peat works, a hail of accurate German fire prevented the Soviet battalions from getting closer than 50 feet to the German positions. On the 17th, a Tiger tank drove north on the road to Shlisselburg in the vicinity of Poselok No. 5. It came under such heavy fire that it tried to turn but in the process got stuck in the peat bog beside the road. An antitank gun hit the thinner armor of its engine compartment, and the Tiger was knocked out.

Zhukov, who at the time was at Meretskov's headquarters, heard of the incident and immediately gave orders that the wreck be captured. By evening, while the Tiger was being towed out by the 18th Rifle Divison, Soviet armor was

akg-images

Congratulating one another on the liberation of the town of Shisselburg in January 1943, Red Army soldiers embrace. Months of hard fighting still lay ahead for the Soviets in their drive to Berlin. OPPOSITE: Soviet Operation Spark was intended to raise the German siege of Leningrad once and for all. However, it proved to be only the first phase of the Red Army effort that was successfully concluded the following spring.

blasting high explosives at the ruined buildings of Poselok No. 5. The Soviets and Germans were fighting for every house and every ruin.

The two regimental groups of the 61st Infantry Division along with 4th SS Police Division troopers held open the Soviet jaws so that their comrades of the 227th and the 96th Infantry Divisions and the 5th Mountain Division could escape encirclement to the north.

Nikolay Vasipov, a veteran of the Soviet 67th Army's 34th Ski Brigade, recounted the fierce fighting along the north-south road: "The trees were smashed and the air was thick with smoke from the burning peat. The Germans had constructed a road through the marshes. It was an inferno and I found it hard to ignore the cries of the wounded echoing through the smoke and the trees. It was hell on Earth."

Fighting continued all night with various German combat groups fighting their way through the rapidly closing gap. On the morning of January 18, the Soviet jaws snapped shut near Poselok No. 1. An hour later, the 136th Rifle Division beat back a determined German counterattack and took Poselok No. 5.

In Leningrad, the rumor of a great Soviet victory spread like wildfire. Windows opened against the cold to proudly display flags. Gramophone music flowed from bombed-out apartments. Late on the night of January 18, 1943, Leningrad radio asked its listeners to stand by for a special message: "The ring has been burst open. We have long waited for this day, but we knew it must come. As we laid our dear ones to rest in the frozen ground of the mass graves, without ceremony, we swore an oath to them by way of a farewell: 'The ring must be burst open!'"

Many more would to perish on the frozen ground. On January 18, Shlisselburg fell to the 86th Rifle Division. Of the 15,000 people who lived there before the war only a few hundred remained. All the others had been shipped to Germany, died from hunger, or were executed by the Germans. Despite this, Vasipov remembers that the citizens of Shlisselburg would have preferred to remain under German occupation. Vasipov claims the remaining population was marched off to Lengingrad and shot by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police.

On the same day that Shlisselburg fell, Lipka was secured by the 128th and 372nd Rifle Divisions. The Soviet divisions bore down on the remaining German units in the pocket, which were desperately trying to get out. Everyone was needed to hold back the two freshly reinforced Soviet fronts, which now turned south, intent on overwhelming Gorodok and Siniavino.

To stop them, Lindemann counted on General Carl Hilpert, who took command over all the German divisions between the River Neva and the River Volkhov, including the 4th SS Police Division; the 1st, 11th, 21st, 212th, and 223rd Infantry Divisions; and the 28th Jäger

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The Last Casualty

BY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL REYNOLDS

SS Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper never escaped the shadow of his wartime service to Nazi Germany.

One of the foremost German characters in the Battle of the Bulge was Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel) Jochen Peiper, the notorious Waffen-SS commander of the strongest armored Kampfgruppe (KG) of the 1st SS Panzer Division, Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (LAH). It was his KG of 117 tanks, some 700 other vehicles, and nearly 5,000 men that Hitler had intended should reach the Meuse River first, but he failed and, after 10 days of intense fighting, was forced to escape through American lines with no heavy equipment and only 800 men left.

Even so, Peiper received swords to his Knight's Cross for his part in his beloved Führer's last great offensive in the west. After the war he was labeled "GI Enemy Number One" for his alleged part in the Malmédy Massacre of American prisoners, and to this day he is remembered by most Americans, and certainly by all Bulge veterans, as a condemned war criminal whose murder in France in 1976 is seen as poetic justice for the man they believe cheated the hangman's noose in 1946. To his German comrades, however, his murder made him the last of the fallen—the last casualty of the famous unit in which he had served for nearly 11 years; and to neo-Nazis and to those with Fascist and far right tendencies he has become a hero whose memory is revered.

On July 16, 1946, at the former concentration camp at Dachau in Bavaria, Jochen Peiper was sentenced to death by hanging for his part in the deaths of 71 surrendered American soldiers at a crossroads near Malmédy, Belgium, on December 17, 1944. The following day he was moved to the fortress at Landsberg—the same prison where Adolf Hitler had been imprisoned in 1925 and had written *Mein Kampf*.

Lieutenant Colonel Willis Everett Jr. had not volunteered for the job of chief defense counsel at Dachau, but he had been appointed as such, and after the 43 death sentences, 22 life sentences, and nine other prison sentences were announced by the military court he became convinced that there had been a gross miscarriage of justice. On December 28, 1946, he filed a petition for the case to be reviewed. He followed this with an application for a stay in the execution of the death sentences until he had been given an opportunity to apply to the U.S. Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus. On January 22, 1947, the New York *Herald Tribune* published an account of pretrial brutalities inflicted on the German defendants and in the same month the U.S. commander in chief in West Germany, General Lucius Clay, ordered an immediate stay of execution of all the death sentences because of the number of petitions before the U.S. Supreme Court.

ullstein bild

As part of his case, Everett stated the following:

1. No defense was possible due to the short period of time, less than two weeks, to prepare the defense of the 74 accused.

2. The unfamiliar and arduous task of communicating through inexperienced interpreters as well as a lack of assigned stenographers and interpreters so hampered the defense staff that it was not even physically possible to interrogate all the accused, much less plan a defense, prior to the forced commencement of the trial.

National Archives

3. The entire plan of this forced trial was calculated to make the whole defense impossible by not allowing time to procure and interview witnesses.

Everett went on to accuse the American prosecution team of mistreating the prisoners before the trial; he alleged beatings, mock trials, deprivation of food and blankets during cold weather, threatening their families with violence, taking them to a "death chamber" where they were shown bullet holes in the wall with flesh and hair embedded in them, and taking them to a "hangman's room" where they were placed on a high stool and had a rope placed around their necks.

Everett also pointed out that all the defendants had been forced to sign prosecution-dictated statements, many of which were straightforward confessions. Nevertheless, his case failed. With a world only too conscious of the worst excesses of Nazi Germany through the discovery of so many concentration camps, no

Men from SS Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung 1, part of Kampfgruppe Peiper, head toward Malmédy. The man at right has often been misidentified as Jochen Peiper, but is probably Unterscharführer Ochsnew. Peiper's unit was the spearhead of the 1944 German offensive in the Ardennes. LEFT: In this pensive photograph taken in 1944, SS Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper seems to be pondering his future.

National Archives

Their bodies riddled with bullets, U.S. soldiers massacred by members of Peiper's 1st SS Panzer Division lie in a frozen field near the village of Malmédy.

one had any sympathy for men found guilty of war crimes—particularly SS men.

The advent of the Cold War and a fear of Soviet intentions soon changed this climate of hatred against the Germans, and after a series of judicial reviews, hearings, and commissions, including an investigation by a U.S. Senate subcommittee with which the infamous Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) became involved, the death sentences handed down at Dachau were gradually commuted. Peiper had spent nearly five years wearing the red tracksuit top of a condemned man and in solitary confinement before his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on January 30, 1951. Then, in May 1954, his life sentence was reduced to 35 years, and on December 22 he was paroled from Landsberg prison. He was the last of 74 men sentenced at Dachau to be released.

What happened to this charismatic, if blemished, soldier after his release? Peiper's parole, ordered by the U.S. commander in chief in West Germany, General H.I. Hodes, was to last until May 21, 1980, and he was to be restricted to the Stuttgart area. He was required to report to his American parole officer, Paul J. Gernert, on the 1st and 15th of each month. His wife, Sigurd, and his three children had remained in their house in Rottach am Tegernsee for the first part of Peiper's imprisonment in Landsberg, but in November 1955 she moved to Sinsheim in Baden-Württemberg to be closer to him. Until she could move again to the Stuttgart area, Peiper was allowed to visit his family only on weekends and holidays and by the most direct route.

While in Landsberg, Peiper had earned an interpreter's diploma in English and had worked in the prison garden and the motor pool and had done some book binding; but in real terms, apart from his knowledge of English, he had no qualifications for civilian employment. His German parole supervisor was a Dr. Theodor Knapp, and his sponsor was Alfred de Maight, the personnel chief of the Porsche Motor Company—at least he had one useful contact and, not surprisingly, he was soon given a job as a clerk in the vehicle assembly and construction office of the company in Zuffenhausen. His first postwar home was as a tenant of a Dr. Hartmann in Klagenfurtstrasse 4, Stuttgart.

By 1956 Peiper was a bitter and disillusioned man. He had witnessed the collapse of his whole world, the Third Reich, and in particular the "family" to which he had given his adult life: the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. The motto of the Leibstandarte had been "My honor is my loyalty," and yet this loyalty, which had sustained him and his comrades through nearly six years of fighting, had finally collapsed at the U.S. Interrogation Center at Schwabisch Hall —even his former adjutant had testified against him.

In 1948 Peiper said, "From this moment on everything was a matter of indifference to me. My confidence in our comradeship was broken and I felt only physical disgust against my Adjutant."

In fairness to his adjutant, though, he went on to point out that the reason he had testified as he did was because he had been shown a false confession allegedly signed by Peiper. The American aim of "breaking down the comradeship" had been achieved.

In the early days of his newfound freedom, Peiper did not seek, nor was he offered, any help from his former comrades. The conditions of his parole banned him from making contact with any of his co-defendants at Dachau or with an organization called HIAG (Waffen-SS Self-Help Organization), which had been set up in 1954 with the aim of helping former Waffen-SS soldiers.

Peiper was released from parole on June 21, 1958, and three years later his obvious talents were recognized when Ferry Porsche, the head of the company, appointed him company secretary. He was the first nonfamily member to get the job, but this promotion brought Peiper to the attention of the powerful union, IG Metall. Ferry Porsche was told that while the union could tolerate a former condemned war criminal as a clerk, it would not accept Peiper as part of the management and would start an adverse publicity campaign if he was confirmed in the position. Porsche had little option other than to cancel the appointment. Peiper threatened to sue the company but eventually settled for six months' salary as compensation. But worse news was to come. The union made it clear that he would be similarly hounded out of all other companies in which they had workers.

Peiper then became an independent sales promoter, first for a Volkswagen dealer in Reutlingen and later in the same capacity in Offenburg and Freiburg. He also did some sales promotion work for a carpentry firm in Offenburg. By April 1967, he was back in Stuttgart, living at Schnellbachstrasse 32, but doing the same work. In a prophetic interview with a French writer in the same year he made his feelings clear:

"I was a Nazi and I remain one.... The Germany of today is no longer a great nation, it has become a province of Europe. That is why, at the first opportunity, I shall settle elsewhere, in France no doubt. I don't particularly care for Frenchmen, but I love France. Of all things, the materialism of my compatriots causes me pain."

On December 11, 1968, Peiper and two of his former officers were accused in a German court of killing Italian civilians in 1943. The Italian authorities and nine plaintiffs brought the case from a small town in northern Italy called Boves. Peiper's unit had been stationed in the area after taking part in the disarming of the Italian Army in August 1943, and the accusations stemmed from an incident the following November when two of his NCOs had been kidnapped in the town, allegedly by Italian soldiers.

When their company commander radioed that he had been attacked by superior forces, Peiper reacted characteristically by leading the rest of his battalion to the rescue. On arrival he shelled the town with 150mm guns, and this had the required effect. Peiper got his men back, but 34 Italians died in the process. The court received depositions from 17 Italians and 126 former members of his battalion and ruled in February 1969 that there was insufficient evidence for formal charges to be laid.

In the same year, while still maintaining his links with the VW dealers, Peiper accepted a position as a liaison officer between the owner and publisher of the magazine *Auto, Motor and Sport* and its chief editor. The latter was by then his closest friend. And it was also in 1969 that he bought a small plot of land in France—at Traves in the Haute Saône. He had first heard about the area when on holiday in St. Tropez in 1962. A German friend, one Herr Moritz, who had been stationed in Lyon during the war and had subsequently bought some wooded land in the area, had told him of its advantages—peace and tranquility, beautiful countryside, a river, relatively inexpensive properties, and close to Germany.

During the winter of 1970-1971, Peiper's editor friend died, and in 1972 he gave up his liaison job with the magazine and, no longer able to afford the high cost of living in Stuttgart, moved to a small house he and his wife had had built on their land by the Saône River in Traves. The French authorities, who had full knowledge of his identity and background, granted him a residence permit on April 27, 1972, which was initially valid until February 27, 1977.

The Peipers were not well off, but their children were grown up and had left home and they could live quite well, if quietly, at Le Renfort (The Reinforcement) alongside the other 280 inhabitants of Traves. The house was roughly 400 meters from the edge of the village, and their nearest neighbor was about 250 meters farther west. The owner was a former Leibstandarte artillery captain named Erwin Ketelhut. He had bought an old mill on the river in 1971 and turned it into what Sigurd described as a most beautiful home. Ketelhut and Peiper had a formal relationship rather than a friendship.

Le Renfort was built on a high bank above the river and lay well back from the country road leading into the village. It was a modest three-bedroom house with vestibule, cloakroom, kitchen, living room, and study on the main floor and a utility room and bathroom on the lower ground floor. There was a terrace along the side of the house and a veranda at one end, next to the study. High trees gave it seclusion, and a barbed wire fence separated Peiper's land from a meadow that lay between it and the village road. At this time his son, Heinrich, was a solicitor in Frankfurt, daughter Elke, a professor in Munich, while his youngest daughter, Silke, was resident in Hamburg.

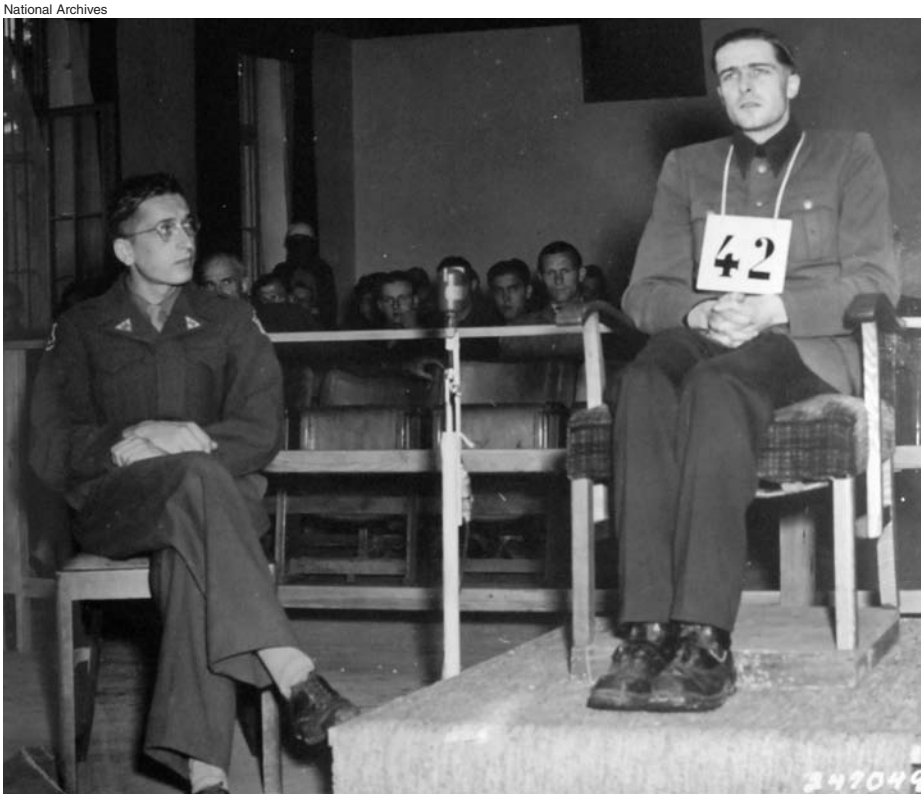
Peiper still retained his advisory contract with the VW dealers in Offenburg and Freiburg, but he had by now also been awarded a contract with Motor Buch Verlag to translate books from English into German. They were mainly military and historical works, and at this time he used a pen name—Reiner Buschmann.

Peiper's son, who moved to New York for a time after his father's death, wrote from there to the author in April 1989, "While he [Peiper] had to translate to earn a living, he did not earn a lot, but what he liked about this job was that he was free and the master of his own time. He loved this piece of land and was a friend of France and the French mentality. Yet, since they shared very little in common, he had little contact with the people of the village."

Although the Peipers kept to themselves, the few contacts they did have in the village are said to have been friendly—at least until the "hate campaign" started in June 1976. They had two Drathaar dogs, Tim and Tam, and about once a month they used to return to Germany in their BMW car (number 8525 JV 70) for important shopping, dental appointments, and so on. Food and simple items were usually bought in the nearest French town, Vesoul. And it was in Vesoul, supposedly when Peiper was buying some fencing wire, that he was noticed as a person of obvious "Teutonic" characteristics and his details passed to the local Communist Party. It did not take long for his identity and full history to be confirmed from photographs and other data.

On June 21, 1976, leaflets were distributed throughout Traves: "People of Traves, a war criminal, SS Peiper is amongst us!" The text went on to call for his expulsion from France,

National Archives



On June 21, 1946, SS Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper takes the stand during his war crimes trial at the site of the former Dachau concentration camp. Peiper and several other former SS soldiers were convicted and sentenced to death.

and the following day the national newspaper *l'Humanité* printed an article on the same lines. Within a few days most of the French and even some international newspapers joined in, and walls and road surfaces in the area were daubed with swastikas, SS runes, and Peiper's name. In a carefully orchestrated campaign the Communists claimed that in exposing Peiper's background to the public they were merely expressing the indignation of the population.

Peiper complained to the French police in Vesoul, and they agreed to provide a guard—but in the daytime only. The West German embassy in Paris had nothing to offer but sympathy and advised him to leave the area, at least temporarily.

Peiper seems to have had some sort of premonition that he was about to fight his last battle. On June 22, he wrote a letter to his wife that, for obvious reasons, he did not give to her at the time and she would not read until after his death:

My Sigi,
Since the shades of the past are now behind me, it looks as though I shall undertake a great adventure—against the stupidity of the repressed masses no living thing can cope. I'd like to thank you once again for everything. You were a great comrade for life and I only regret that I did not provide you with a more carefree existence.

My last thoughts will therefore be about your security, safety and peace of mind. The first of these comes from insurances and pensions and the last I hope you will find in the area of Greater Munich.

I think that to sell Traves would be wrong and it would be better to lease it. The children ought to pay for the very small maintenance costs and occasionally see that everything is in order. In good days this particular piece of prime natural land can be a connecting link between us and in bad times a haven, despite all the present harassments. I would also consider it very important that later on you would not just leave Traves to our three children but leave a part of it to Bettina Wieselmann [Peiper's ward]. She has understood me more than our distinguished children—she is more devoted to Traves than they are.

And then my dogs—they only had a few years but they were good years and I wish them to have a good and completely unexpected leap into the eternal hunting ground where I hope to find them.

My burial, cremation, or whatever I have. I wish you to carry out without publicity, family taking part or any of my comrades being there and at least cost.

National Archives

Peiper said he was not particularly worried because he did not believe the people making the threats were particularly courageous.

A final embrace from me and I hope you will still enjoy a few carefree and healthy years in beautiful Bavaria—please remember only the wonderful hours of our life together.

Jo

On June 23, Peiper was interviewed by a French newspaper reporter. When asked about his Nazi past he replied, "That is a ridiculous question…. I was young and idealistic against Bolshevism. I do not understand why people keep dragging up history. As the Italians say, 'The coffee is cold.' Today, it is time for reconciliation in Europe."

And when asked about his association with the SS, he said, "I was not political. I was never a member of the Nazi party. I was a soldier."

By the beginning of July, Peiper had become an embarrassment to the French authorities. Giscard d'Estaing, a conservative independent Republican with an autocratic style, was president of France, and the Communists and other opponents of the government were delighted to be able to claim that a known Nazi war criminal was being given sanctuary and protection in France. Peiper realized that his residence permit was unlikely to be renewed. On July 9, he wrote to his dentist, friend, and former adjutant in the Leibstandarte, Arndt Fischer. He told him that he was thinking of leasing the Traves house and moving to a "green" area like greater Munich; his wife would come and look for a property in the autumn. He outlined the current situation and said that, although he would like to come and discuss matters with Fischer, this was impossible as he had "to hold this position."

On July 13, Peiper received letters and telephone calls telling him his house and dogs would be burned. There was no direct threat to kill him. Sigurd left the same day in the BMW. It is not clear exactly where she went. Arndt Fischer told the author in 1991 that she had a long-standing arrangement to visit an old friend in Strasbourg and that Peiper had encouraged her to keep the appointment. This may well be true, or she may possibly have gone to her son in Frankfurt. She and Heinrich appeared together in Vesoul on July 15, 1976—the day after Peiper's death.

After his wife left, Peiper wrote two letters. In the first, to Rudolf Lehmann, the former chief of staff of the 1st SS Panzer Division and a personal friend, he said that his "quiet haven" had become "an entrenched camp" and that he would "move in the autumn if the Communists allow me to wait until then." The second was to another old friend, Dr. Ernst Klink, of Waldkirch near Freiburg. Klink was another former Waffen-SS officer who, after the war, had worked in the federal military archives in Freiburg.

Peiper wrote that, owing to "uncertainties in Franco-German relations," he had stopped writing his book and was therefore sending him the existing material. He went on to say that if Bettina Wieselmann came to see him, he should give her every assistance.

Later the same day, Peiper and Ketelhut discussed the overall situation. Peiper said he was not particularly worried because he did not believe the people making the threats were particularly courageous; and anyway he had a Colt .38 revolver and a .22 rifle with which to defend himself. Ketelhut offered to lend him a Remington 12-bore shotgun, which he accepted, and to keep an eye on the area that evening from his balcony at the mill. He took the precaution of equipping himself with two loaded rifles.

At about 11:30 PM, Ketelhut, having heard and seen nothing suspicious, took a weak

sleeping pill and went to bed. One and a half hours later, on Bastille Day 1976, he was awakened by the sound of the village siren and from his balcony he saw flames leaping from Peiper's house.

When the local fire brigade was called out in the early hours of July 14, their pump was found to be unserviceable; the 11 firemen were questioned by the police but the pump was found to be genuinely defective and there were no traces of sabotage.

After the fire was eventually extinguished, the police discovered a badly burned body in the remains of the study. Due to the intense heat generated by the fire, it had shrunk to a length of about 60 cm and was barely recognizable as that of a human being. When Ketelhut was shown the body at 5 AM the following day, he said: "It is him but he is miniaturized."

Under the body the police found a fire-damaged .22 rifle with an expended case in the chamber and nearby a Colt .38 revolver with five expended rounds in the cylinder. A further 13 unexpended .38-caliber rounds were found in the same room. Out on the terrace they discovered three expended shotgun cartridges, a Remington 12-bore shotgun with an open, empty breech, and a strong smell of powder.

An examination of the garden revealed traces of shot near an oak tree about 10 meters from the house and a .38-caliber bullet at about the same distance from the veranda, between a pine tree and the kennel.

Both Peiper's dogs had been wounded, and there were four 6.35mm bullets in the blood-stained kennel. A 6.35mm pistol is a very small weapon indeed, usually carried by ladies for self-protection.

It appeared that the victim had tried to save some clothes belonging to Frau Peiper by throwing them out of the house, and in front of the veranda the police discovered a pair of binoculars and some personal papers, including Peiper's last letter to his wife. Peiper's watch, which was found on the body, had stopped at 1 AM and a clock in the house at 1:07.

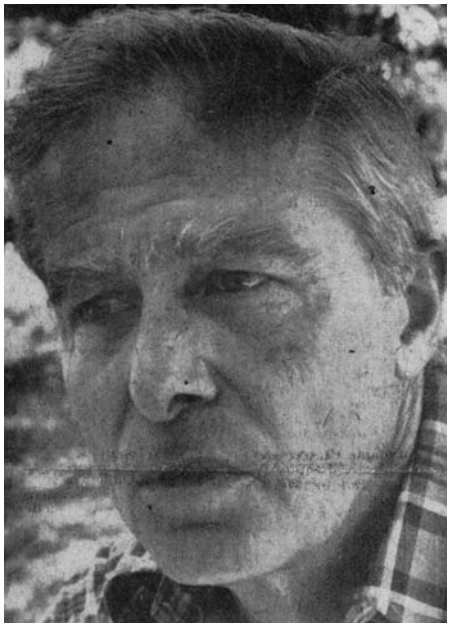
Two experts in arson, one from Lyon and the other from Marseilles, investigated the fire the day after the attack. They judged that it had started at the back of the house, the side nearest the road, and taken hold very quickly due to the wooden floors and ceilings. Three different sources of the fire were discovered, and one poorly made Molotov cocktail was found outside the house and the remains of three more in the study.

The subsequent criminal investigation was carried out by the Police Judiciaire of Dijon. The principal police commissioner was Monsieur Guichaux, and the chief inspector was named Casseboix. It was found that the wire fence between the garden and the meadow had been cut with wirecutters, and from the projected trajectories of the various weapons fired by the victim the police concluded that he had attempted to dissuade his attackers from firebombing his house by firing all three weapons at them. There was no evidence of any weapons being fired toward the house, and therefore no evidence of any direct attempt to kill the victim. There had been no attempt to cut the telephone line to the house.

Author's Collection

ABOVE: Kurt Meyer, Jochen Peiper, Otto Günsche (Hitler's last adjutant), and Sepp Dietrich celebrate Peiper's release from prison in December 1956. BELOW: This photo of Jochen Peiper was taken shortly before his murder. OPPOSITE: Colonel Willis Everett, Jr., appointed chief defense counsel for the German prisoners, including Peiper, who were put on trial for war crimes in 1946, addresses the court.

Author's Collection



Soon after Ketelhut was shown the body, it was moved to Vesoul, and the following day, after Frau Peiper and her son had failed to identify it, a post mortem examination was carried out by two French medical examiners. No bullets or obvious bullet wounds were found in the corpse. The jawbone with teeth was then removed for further examination and inquiries made with the various doctors and dentists who had attended Peiper after his release from Landsberg.

The dentists included a Dr. Schwartz in Vaihingen, who had attended Peiper between 1964 and 1966; Dr. Reide of the same town, who was his dentist between 1969 and 1972; and Dr. Fischer of Munich (his former adjutant) who had looked after him after he moved to France. He had last seen Peiper four months before the attack and taken his last X-ray on February 9, 1975. All three provided their records to the authorities, but strangely the French did not ask the Americans to provide his medical records from Landsburg. These were, and still are, held in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

After considering all the dental records, two French experts declared, "We conclude without a doubt that the X-rays of the jaw bone and teeth from previous dental files are similar to the anatomical piece sent for investigation."

On January 17, 1977, a panel of eight French experts, including a senior policeman, two professors of medicine, and three doctors, published a statement concerning the body found

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Assaulting Singapore

BY JOHN BROWN

Hours after Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Japanese troops landed in northern Malaya and began moving south toward Singapore.

In Singapore, Captain Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders, an intelligence officer at British Army headquarters, was ordered to the Dutch East Indies island of Sumatra to organize a route across the island that could be used by the military, the idea being that if "impregnable" Singapore came under prolonged siege by the Japanese, troops from India could be landed on the west coast of Sumatra at Padang and take the route laid out by Lyon to the east coast where they would be close to Singapore to mount relief operations. In the event, however, Singapore surrendered on February 15, 1942, and refugees escaping from Malaya and Singapore used the route in the reverse direction across the island.

Bill Reynolds was an Australian who had served aboard destroyers in World War I and had lived in Burma, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies for the past 20 years. Nearly 50 years old, he volunteered his services at British naval headquarters in Singapore and was given command of the *Kofuku Maru,* a narrow-gutted 70-foot-long Japanese fishing boat seized by the British when the war began. He found half a dozen Chinese willing to crew her and began picking up refugees—British, Chinese, Malays and others—from the islands around Singapore where they had been stranded when the ships in which they had been attempting to escape had been bombed and strafed by Japanese aircraft.

He crammed 50 or more into the *Kofuku Maru* and, sometimes towing disabled craft filled with refugees, ferried them to Sumatra. It was there that he met Ivan Lyon, and it was there that Lyon first got the idea of raiding Singapore. Listening to Reynolds, who had been operating the *Kofuku Maru* around Singapore for two weeks during which he had rescued some 1500 people, he probably asked himself why could not he, Lyon, go back into Singapore waters on a mission designed to cause trouble for the Japanese?

In early March, with Malaya and Singapore in Japanese hands, with the Dutch East Indies invaded, and Japanese troops closing in, Lyon crossed the island of Sumatra, commandeered a native fishing prahu and, with 15 Europeans, one Chinese, and one Malay on board, raised the rotting sail and took off into the Indian Ocean with only a prismatic compass, a page torn from a nautical manual, and his wrist watch to navigate by. But he was an experienced small boat sailor and, surviving strafing by Japanese planes, storms, periods of dead calm, and searing heat, he reached Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) 1,700 miles and 52 days later.

Subsequently, in Delhi, India, Lyon learned that Bill Reynolds had sailed the *Kofuku Maru* all the way to India and was now in Bombay. It was then that the idea that had been simmering in his mind crystallized—use the *Kofuku Maru,* a Japanese fishing boat indistinguishable from hundreds of others in use in Asian waters, to raid Japanese ships and installations in Singapore harbor.

He sketched out a plan and took it to the SOE (Special Operations Executive) India Mission where it was approved. But because of poor security in India and Japanese vigilance in the Indian Ocean approaches to Singapore, SOE asked Australia's clandestine operations unit SRD (Services Reconnaissance Department) to undertake the training, manning, equipping and dispatch of the expedition from Australia.

Lyon renamed the *Kofuku Maru* the *Krait* after the six-inch-long Asian snake with nerve-paralyzing venom that can kill in minutes and codenamed the operation Jaywick after the powerful deodorant Jay Wick used extensively in Malaya and Singapore.

Bill Reynolds tried twice to sail the *Krait* to Australia, but each time her old engine broke down and she was finally shipped to Sydney as deck cargo on a freighter. By then Lyon, now Major Lyon, had selected his team and they were undergoing intensive training near Sydney in canoeing and night navigation and movement on sea and land, sharpening their skill with a variety of weapons and explosives and in unarmed combat. After three months the team moved north to the ZES (Z Experimental Station) near Cairns on Queensland's far north coast to wait for the *Krait* while continuing their vigorous training.

After numerous breakdowns the *Krait* was towed to Townsville, south of Cairns, her engine completely useless. There Bill Reynolds left her. A 51-year-old civilian, he went to Melbourne, Victoria, where he joined the clandestine civilian Bureau of Economic Warfare. Fluent in Malay and with a good grasp of Chinese, he was landed by the American submarine Tuna in the Straits of Macassar to pick up information from Chinese secret agents but was betrayed to the Japanese by local people. After months in the notorious Surabaya prison on Java he was sentenced to be executed. The tall, lanky Reynolds refused to kneel for beheading by the executioner's sword and the small, perplexed executioner had to call on some soldiers to form a firing squad.

Harbor

Brave Australian raiders sank several Japanese ships in a daring attack.

In this stirring portrayal by artist Dennis Adams, Australian commandos are depicted sabotaging Japanese shipping in Singapore harbor in September 1943. The initial raid against Singapore succeeded beyond the expectations of planners.

Australian War Memorial

All photos: Australian War Memorial

Converted from its original use as a fishing boat to wartime service, the *Krait,* which transported the Australian raiders during their assault on shipping in Singapore harbor, is shown resting at anchor. The *Krait* is on display today in an Australian museum.

Lyon located a replacement engine for the *Krait* in Hobart, Tasmania, and had it shipped to Townsville and installed. For simplicity's sake and to save space, he scrapped the part of his plan to destroy harbor installations in Singapore and concentrated on shipping. Even so, when the 70-foot-by-11-foot *Krait* sailed to Cairns and was fitted out with supplies and stores for six months. With diesel fuel, kerosene, canoes, weapons, explosives, equipment, spare parts, and radio gear, there was only enough space left for the team to sleep a few at a time in hammocks slung in any vacant spot.

Lyon's team included Donald Davidson, second-in-command, British Royal Navy, a tough, resourceful Englishman who had spent years in Australia's outback and the jungles of Southeast Asia and had been commissioned in the Navy in Singapore with no previous naval experience; Lieutenant Bob Page, Australian Army, former third-year medical student who had swapped university studies for special operations; Lieutenant Ted Carse, Australian Navy, navigator, who had sworn off alcohol for this operation; Stoker Paddy McDowell, British Royal Navy, ship's engineer and World War I veteran; Corporal Taffy Morris, a British Army medic who had escaped from Sumatra with Lyon; Corporal Andrew Crilley, an Australian Army engineer who had volunteered to be cook to get selected for the team; Telegraphist Horrie Young, Australian Navy; and six young Australian Navy seamen who had not yet been to sea—Wally Falls, Freddie Marsh, Cobber Cain, Andrew Huston, Arthur Jones, and Mostyn Berryman. All were volunteers from the Z Special Unit, usually called Z Force.

On August 9, 1943, they left Cairns on a 2,400-mile voyage around the north of Australia to Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia. There the crew of the American submarine repair ship *Chanticleer* did some excellent repair work on the *Krait* while refusing to believe that the "crate" had made it all the way from Cairns. They prepared her with 150 pounds of plastic explosives so that she could easily be blown up if captured.

On September 2, the *Krait* left Exmouth Gulf heading north into a vicious, unexpected storm. Vastly overloaded and unwieldy in open ocean, she was continually washed over. Great waves threatened to sink her, and a hole had to be chopped in her side to release the huge amount of sea she took aboard. On the second day, the storm abated and Lyon called the team together and told them their objective, ending long speculation.

"It is Singapore harbor," he said, and his announcement brought only one disappointed comment.

"I thought it would be Tokyo. If I'd known it wasn't, I wouldn't have come," said one crewman.

Lyon briefed the team members on the operation. The *Krait* would drop a six-man attack team on one of the islands as close as possible to Singapore harbor from where they would make the attack in three canoes while the *Krait* hid among the islands and come back to pick them up after the operation. He named the six men who would carry out the attack, ignored the protestations and curses of the ones who would have to remain on the *Krait,* and laid down the rules. The Japanese flag would be flown at all times; as they hoped to pass as local fishermen their faces and bodies would be stained brown, and Malay-style sarongs would be worn; no garbage would be thrown over the side that might identify them if it was found; no lights at night.

On September 8, the raiders were more than 700 miles north of Australia and within sight of Gunung Agung, the 10,000-foot sacred mountain of Bali, and the equally sacred 12,000-foot Gunung Rinjani on the nearby island of Lombok. That night they steered between the two islands into the 25-mile-long Lombok Strait, hoping their fishing boat flying the Japanese flag would not be challenged and to make it through by dawn. But they quickly encountered a problem.

The strait was a maze of extremely strong currents and rip tides. They were so strong that at one time during the night the raiders did not advance at all for two hours as the *Krait* battled a current as fast as her own speed of eight knots. In six hours, she made half a mile before the tide changed and the currents ran with them. When dawn broke they were still in the middle of the strait with the coast of Bali on one side and the tents and huts of a Japanese military camp on an island on the other.

However, they were not challenged and by 10 that morning navigator Ted Carse was able to write in his log: "Thank Christ we are just through Lombok…." They were now in the Java Sea.

Keeping away from sea lanes and among islands and shoals, they sighted only a two-masted Macassar proa and a Japanese plane on their first day in the Java Sea. On the second they heard on the radio that Italy had surrendered and toasted the news with mugs of cocoa. During the night they were close to the coast of Borneo, and the next day swarms of butterflies followed them for miles. They began to see more and more fishing craft and trading vessels as they continued on into the China Sea.

In the "Thousand Islands" that led to Singapore, Lyon decided that the *Krait* should not wait among the islands while the attack took place in the harbor since it would be difficult to hide among them during the search that would inevitably follow the attack. The *Krait* would cruise the Borneo coast and come back to collect the attack team after the operation.

On the night of September 16, the raiders anchored off a beach on the island of Pompong, and Davidson, Cain, and Jones went ashore and buried cans of water and emergency supplies. During the night they listened to the growl of engines as Japanese seaplanes were warmed up at the base on nearby Chempa Island and watched searchlight beams in the sky.

The following day they searched for a suitable island from which the attack could be launched. Several times they jumped to action

stations when Japanese motorboats came close and once sweated it out as they passed within clear sight of a Japanese observation post. Finally, Lyon decided on one of the islands they had seen earlier, and they turned back to it, the lights of Singapore in the sky behind them.

In blustery winds and rough seas they anchored off a beach on Pandjang Island and stacked the gear for the attack team on deck. The sound of the powerful engine of a patrol boat came from close by in the darkness, and they waited in silence until it faded away. It returned, but farther off. An hour after midnight the wind died down, and they were able to launch the dinghy. Davidson and Jones rowed ashore and searched the island for signs of habitation but could not find any.

The gear was taken ashore—canoes, limpet mines, food and water, arms and ammunition, clothing, medical kits, and a bag of Dutch gold guilders. The Japanese patrol boat, whose engine they had heard earlier, again passed very close.

Lyon called a meeting of the team. It was decided that this island, Pandjang, 30 miles from Singapore, was too close as a pickup point after the raid, that 12 days should be allowed for the raid, and that the attack team should be picked up at Pompong Island—50 miles from Singapore—where they had buried the emergency rations. Pickup would be at midnight on October 1. If the attack team was not there, the *Krait* would return 48 hours later.

At 4 AM, the attack team—Major Lyon, Lieutenants Davidson and Page, and Seamen Falls, Jones and Huston—shook hands with the others and were rowed ashore.

The *Krait* up-anchored and moved away in the darkness to cruise aimlessly along the coast of Borneo and in the China Sea for two boring weeks, the crew passing the time as best they could, impatiently waiting out the long days and nights until they could sail for the rendezvous.

On Panjang Island the attack team found they had rubbery legs after having been cooped up on the *Krait* for so long. They dragged the gear inland and hid it and spent the next two days exercising, always with one on guard to warn when planes came close or ships or boats were passing the island. After dark on the second night, they carried the canoes and gear back to the beach.

The canoes were 17 feet long and, loaded with two men, limpet mines, arms, equipment, food and water, weighed almost a third of a ton. They got them into the sea and waited, each man dressed in a black Japara silk suit and black exercise shoes, faces and hands blackened, pistols and knives strapped on, compasses and first aid kits in zippered pockets, each with a cyanide tablet within easy reach in case of need. When the regular Japanese patrol boat passed, they climbed into the canoes and began paddling toward Singapore, Lyon and Huston in one, Davidson and Falls in another, and Page and Jones in the third.

They paddled until midnight, covering 11 miles, and then, tired and sore from the unaccustomed labor, pulled in at the small, uninhabited island of Bulat. They unloaded the canoes and carried their gear to a grove of palms in the scrub and lay down and slept until daylight.

Waking, they looked out to sea to find a motorized sampan flying a Japanese flag moving slowly toward the beach, and on the beach there was still some of their gear. Two of the canoes were only partly hidden. Pistols ready, cursing themselves for their carelessness, they watched the sampan anchor just off the beach. During the next hour they held their breath as Japanese sailors moved around on the deck of the sampan, but none of them noticed the gear on the beach. When the sampan left, they quickly got the gear and canoes under cover.

After dark, still stiff and sore from the previous night's paddling in the cramped canoes, they set off for the Bulan Strait. The strait was only a mile wide, and the rip tides and whirls among the islands made paddling the heavily laden canoes extremely difficult. They had traveled less than nine miles when they dragged the canoes among the mangroves of Bulan Island just before dawn. When dawn broke, they heard voices calling and could see people moving about in a village only a short distance away on the next island. Looking around, they saw more villages dotting other small islands, and sailboats and canoes began using a channel only yards away from them.

They laced mangrove branches as camouflage, ate some of their rations, and lay down in the stinking mangrove mud to sleep, their calm broken by calls coming from the villages, dog fights, and the shouts of boatmen passing so close that the sails of their boats blotted out the sun. It was a miserable day. Sandflies attacked them in swarms, and crabs nipped them as they lay baking in the sun, but in the

ABOVE: As the *Krait* sails toward Singapore harbor, members of the Australian raiding party are busily staining their bodies in preparation for the raid. At a distance the raiders' stained bodies resembled the native population more closely. LEFT: Six members of the Z Unit team pose for a photographer outside a tent at their training camp: Major Ivan Lyon stands second from left; J.P McDowell is second from right; Major J.A. "Jock" Campbell is at far right.

late afternoon it rained heavily and, refreshed somewhat by it, they left in their canoes as soon as it was dark.

They were out of the Bulan Strait by midnight and by 2 AM could see the lights of Singapore in the sky—they were too low in the water to see them directly. They landed on Dongas Island and hid their canoes and gear. They were eight miles from their target and 2,000 miles from their base at Exmouth Gulf, Western Australia.

The next morning they checked the island and found it uninhabited. From a high point, using a telescope, they spent hours looking through the haze into the harbor. For Huston, Falls, and Jones, Singapore was just another island, an island to be attacked, but for the other three there were emotional links. Bob Page's father was a prisoner in Singapore as were Donald Davidson's brothers, and for Ivan Lyon it was his wife and young son. They had escaped Singapore before its fall and reached Ceylon. Sailing to Australia to join Lyon, their ship was sunk in the Indian Ocean and they were taken as prisoners to Singapore. Lyon knew that much but did not know they had been moved to a prison camp in Japan. They survived in the camp until freed by American troops when Japan surrendered.

The attack team rested on Dongas Island for much of the next two days and watched the courses steered by a variety of ships for evidence of minefields. They could not detect any.

THEY COULD SEE THROUGH THE TELESCOPE THAT SHIPS WERE DISPERSING IN THE HARBOR.... SIRENS WAILED CONTINUOUSLY. THEN THEY SAW THE PLANES. THE HUNT FOR THEM WAS ON.

There seemed to be no regular air or sea patrols or port security measures, and at night there was no blackout of Singapore city. The Japanese were taking few precautions; they were obviously very sure of themselves.

On the second afternoon, a convoy of 13 ships moved into the Roads, preparatory to leaving the harbor. It was too good a target to miss, and after dark the team carried their canoes to the beach and launched them.

At midnight they were still two miles from the Roads, fighting a crosstide, when a searchlight snapped on. Motionless, they floated for half a minute in the glare, expecting an alarm to sound, and then the light went out. They closed up and decided that, because of the crosstide, they would have to give up for the night. They also decided they would find another island from which to launch their attack.

They left Dongas Island the next night and, fighting the tides between islands, they reached Subar Island, seven miles west of Dongas, just before dawn.

Subar was a rocky island, the rocks too hot to touch, and so hot it was impossible to sleep during the day. The men lay on blankets on a cliff top where they could look down on the sea 60 feet below and watch the passing parade of junks and ketches, proas and sampans. The heat haze lifted in mid-afternoon, and through the telescope they examined the harbor, transferring what they saw to their chart and planning their attack that night.

Under a moonless sky they paddled for the lights of Singapore. In the harbor they twice lay forward and motionless in their canoes while searchlights played over them, but no alarm was raised. Then they separated, looking for targets.

Along Bukum wharves where the sea glowed with reflected light, Bob Page and Arthur Jones passed a 5,000-ton freighter, then a small coastal ship and a big, well-lit tanker on which welders were working. Page decided on the freighter. They had to cross a large patch of full light before they came into the shadow of the freighter, and when their eyes adjusted they moved along its hull attaching limpet mines below the waterline, timed to explode at 5 AM.

They hung on the anchor chain, resting and eating chocolate bars and listening to the chatter of the welders and other workmen on the tanker until, warned by instinct, they looked up to see a uniformed Japanese guard on the deck above them. Unmoving, they watched him for several minutes until he spat into the sea beside them and moved on. They paddled away.

Their second target was a large, modern ship low in the water with cargo. The glow of its lights on the water around it and the red dots of cigarettes being smoked by the crew on deck made it a dangerous target, but they took the risk and attached limpets. Leaving this ship, they were caught in a rip current that, before they realized what was happening, bumped the canoe against the rudder of a heavily laden tramp steamer. They attached their remaining limpets to it and, bathed in sweat and desperately tired, they began paddling for Dongas Island where they would meet the others.

Ivan Lyon and Andrew Huston paddled into Examination Anchorage where, in contrast to the lights that had plagued Page and Jones, there was almost complete darkness. Low in the water, it was almost impossible for them to spot ships against the blackness of the anchorage and the shoreline hills. They paddled for two hours unable to find a ship and then saw a red light and the silhouette of a tanker. They circled her, noting how low she was in the water and, knowing that it was difficult to sink a tanker with limpets, they decided to put all they had on her.

As they could hear voices on deck, they worked slowly and cautiously. They placed three limpets over her engine room, another three around her propeller, and moved along her starboard side. With two more limpets attached and the last one ready to go on, Lyon looked up to see, 10 feet above him, a man's head out of a porthole, his face pale against the black hull. The man sniffed and cleared his throat, and Lyon, the limpet in his hands, wondered if he would have time to attach it. So he set a one-minute fuse to detonate it if they were challenged. The head disappeared, a light appeared in the porthole, and they waited for the man to return with a flashlight to shine on them. He did not. Lyon attached the limpet, and they paddled away.

Donald Davidson and Wally Falls paddled into Keppel Harbor, where they were almost run down by a steam ferry. Passing the yacht club, they could hear Japanese voices raised in song and other sounds of party revelry. In Empire Dock, where there were ships, it was so highly floodlit and there was so much activity going on they kept moving, following an ocean-going tug into the Roads off the business heart of Singapore. Here there were plenty of ships and a lot of light.

They drifted in beside a heavily laden

freighter and attached three limpets, then moved on and did the same to a second freighter and a third. The Victoria Hall clock chimed 1 AM. It was getting late. They decided not to return to Dongas Island but to make straight for the rendezvous on Pompong Island.

Lyon, Huston, Page, and Jones reached Dongas just before daylight, and after nine hours in the canoes they were so exhausted and sore they had great difficulty unloading and hiding the canoes. But they scrambled up the hill and waited expectantly in the growing daylight. At 5:15 they heard a dull explosion—and six minutes later a second one. They could hear the sound of sirens. In the next 20 minutes they heard five more explosions. "A good night's work," Jones said.

With full daylight they could see through the telescope that ships were dispersing in the harbor and watched smoke billowing from the burning tanker. Sirens wailed continuously. Then they saw the planes. The hunt for them was on.

Naval patrol boats and fast sampans joined the planes. With one on guard the others tried to sleep, but exhausted as they were they could only doze and wake to the sound of engines above and close by them. That evening a naval patrol boat passed slowly only 50 yards off the beach while officers examined the island through binoculars. When the patrol boat moved on and as soon as it was dark, they launched the canoes and left the island.

Patrolling Japanese boats and storms delayed them and they reached Pompong Island at 3 AM on October 2. The *Krait* was not there. They crawled and staggered up the beach, hid the canoes and gear, and collapsed.

The *Krait* had returned to Pompong Island for the rendezvous. The crew had heard no news on the radio about the raid and were unaware as to the fate of the attack team. With the possibility that the team had been captured and an ambush was waiting at Pompong, the crew had their weapons cocked as the *Krait* moved slowly to the landing beach and the anchor was dropped. It was 12.30 AM—they were half an hour late. They saw a movement on the beach, and Davidson called to them. Minutes later he and Falls were on board.

They waited until dawn and then left, watched by Lyon, Page, Huston, and Jones from another beach. In their exhaustion and the dark, they had waited on the wrong beach. They moved to the right beach and waited for the *Krait* to return two nights later. She arrived exactly on time at midnight.

ABOVE: One of the Australian raiders hides the small, two-man canoe he and a comrade paddled to an island near Singapore harbor. OPPOSITE: A pair of Sleeping Beauty craft is transported aboard a Pom Pom boat during training exercises prior to the Singapore harbor raid.

Except for one tense occasion when a Japanese destroyer passed them 100 yards away for eight minutes while officers examined the *Krait* through binoculars from the bridge, the voyage back to Western Australia was relatively uneventful. On October 19, they anchored in Exmouth Gulf, 47 days and 5,000 miles after heading north for Singapore, with 33 of those days very definitely in Japanese waters.

Although the loss of Japanese shipping in the operation, 37,000 tons, was very small in comparison with, say, Japanese ships sunk by American submarines, the sheer daring of the operation would have given a boost to Allied morale if it had been publicized and would probably have created panic in every Japanese occupied port in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. But the operation was classified top secret as knowledge of it by the Japanese could jeopardize any future similar operations. The story of operation Jaywick was buried in the files until long after the war.

The Jaywick team returned to Z Force, not knowing that in Singapore the Japanese had blamed local saboteurs for the sinking of their ships and begun an investigation that led to the imprisonment, torture and execution of hundreds of Chinese and Malays, and some of the Europeans interned on the island.

Ivan Lyon, now a lieutenant colonel, believing that the Japanese would not expect another attack on Singapore, proposed a second, larger attack. British Special Operations approved it, and Lyon went to England to check on all the latest materials and equipment. There he examined a large minelaying submarine, the *Porpoise,* and tried out a Sleeping Beauty (SB), a 13-foot craft that could carry a man at four and one-half knots on the surface of the water or three and one-half knots underwater and had a range of 12 miles on a fully charged battery. The minelaying submarine and SBs were just what he wanted.

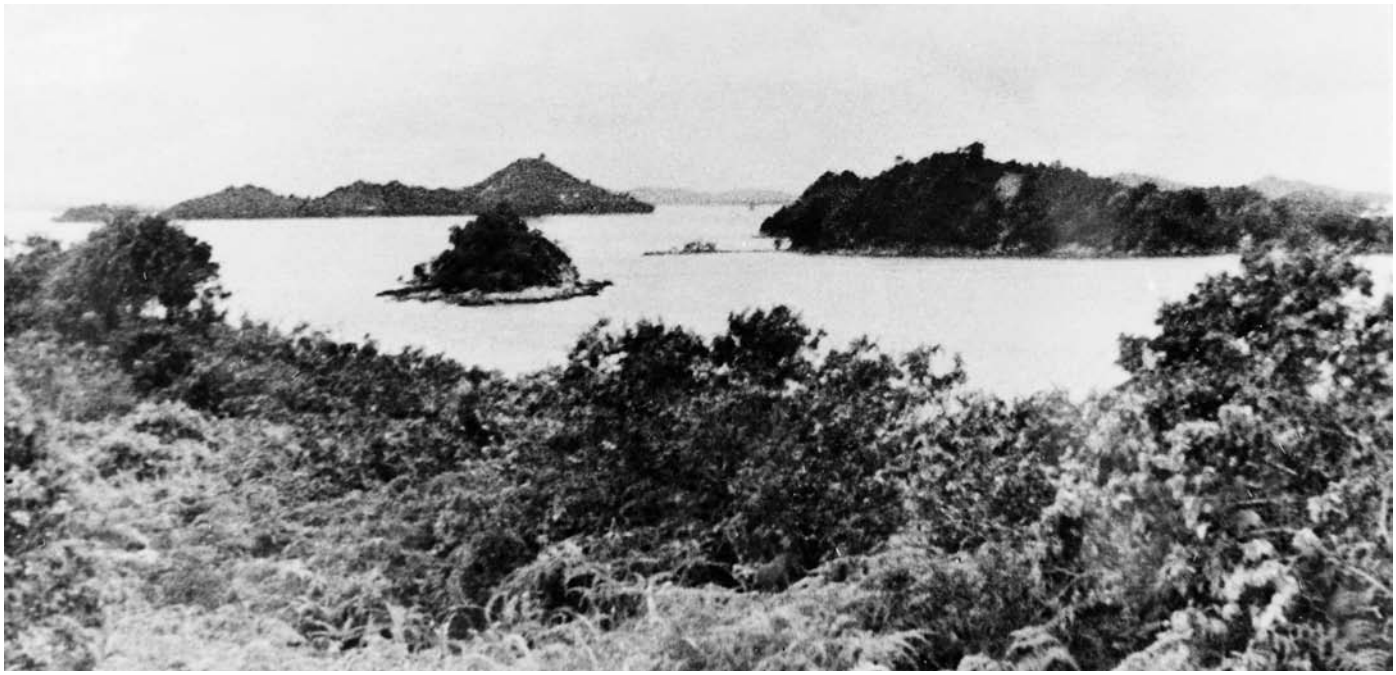
He returned to Australia, and at Careening Bay near Fremantle in Western Australia he began selecting and training volunteers for the operation he codenamed Rimau, the Malay word for tiger.

He decided to use four of the men who had been on the Jaywick operation, Davidson, Page, Falls and Huston, and 17 other British and Australian sailors and commandos. Major Reginald Ingleton of the British Royal Marines would go with them as an observer, but he quickly joined in as one of the team.

On September 11, 1944, the minelaying submarine *Porpoise* left Careening Bay crammed with 15 SBs, 11 folboats (special operations canoes), 15 tons of supplies, arms, limpet mines, radio and other equipment, and Lyon and his 22-man team. Off the coast of Borneo a two-masted junk named *Mustika* was captured and sailed to the island of Pedjantan, where the team's equipment and supplies were transferred to it. The *Porpoise,* with the crew of the *Mustika* aboard, returned to Australia promising to come back for the team in 40 days.

Nothing more was heard of Operation Rimau until after the war when Services Reconnaissance Department files were opened to researchers and their contents linked with information from other sources and reports of the interrogation of Japanese officers, the Kempei Tai, and local people of Singapore and the islands.

After leaving the *Porpoise,* Lyon and his team sailed the *Mustika* into the Thousand Islands, looking for a suitable base from which to launch their attack. Late one afternoon, in the lull before rain began and with the *Mustika*'s sails hanging limp, they drifted past the small island of Kasu. Unexpectedly they came upon a fishing village, a few houses on piles sunk in the sand and mud. As they drifted closer a motor launch came toward them. In it were half a dozen Water Police, Malays who wore Japanese uniforms and



Subar island served as the launching point for the final run-in as Australian raiders hit shipping anchored in the harbor at Singapore.

were controlled by the Kempei Tai.

Closer, it was obvious to the Malays that the men on the *Mustika* were Europeans even though their bodies were stained brown and they were wearing sarongs and straw coolie hats. One of the team opened fire on them, killing them all except one who dived over the side and swam back to the village. The incident took place within sight of the people of the village.

Knowing that armed Japanese ships and planes would soon be on the scene, Lyon had no alternative but to abort the operation. He ordered 12 of the team away in six of the folboats and with the others sailed the *Mustika* into deeper water where they launched folboats and a folding boat filled with equipment and blew up the *Mustika* and the SBs.

Although the team was primarily concerned with escape, there is evidence that Lyon and some of the men paddled into the Roads outside Singapore harbor and attached limpets to some ships. There were several explosions that night, and three ships were sunk. Believing it was the work of local resistance fighters, the Japanese retaliated, and severed heads of Chinese and Malays soon appeared on spikes around the port city. It was only when news of the incident at Kasu reached Kempei Tai headquarters that the hunt for the Rimau team began, and by then they were scattered among the islands. They were hunted for weeks.

In a clash with Japanese soldiers on Soreh Island, Donald Davidson and Archie Campbell were both badly wounded. When the Japanese pulled back waiting for reinforcements, the two wounded men were given shots of morphine and put in a folboat. They paddled toward Tapai Island while Lyon and two others stayed behind to hold off the Japanese and give them a good start.

More than a hundred reinforcements arrived, and Lyon, Lieutenant Bobbie Ross, and Corporal Clair Stewart held them off for most of the night with Sten guns and grenades, killing 44 and wounding 20. Toward dawn, Lyon and then Ross were killed. Stewart, wounded, evaded the Japanese but was later captured. He was tortured but refused to say anything about the operation. Davidson and Campbell reached Tapai Island where, in agony from their wounds and unable to go any farther, they swallowed cyanide tablets.

Others of the team were killed, died of wounds or were captured, some after incredible feats of endurance. Two were captured on Java where one of them died after being inoculated with drugs in a medical experiment carried out by Japanese doctors. Two others, Australian commandos Warrant Officer Jeffrey Willersdorf and Corporal Hugo Pace, sailed a small fishing kolek from island to island 2,000 miles along the coasts of Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lombok, and Flores to Romang Island near Timor where they were betrayed to the Japanese. They were taken to Timor, where they died of torture, starvation, and disease.

In all, 10 of the team were brought as prisoners to Singapore. The Japanese considered them warriors in the spirit of Bushido, who had fought and had been captured, not surrendered. They treated them with respect. They were questioned repeatedly but not badly treated even thought they refused to tell anything of real importance about the operation.

At the end of May 1945, a new Japanese commander in Singapore ordered that they be court-martialed. The court martial was held in early July, apparently against strong opposition by many in the Japanese military. The team was accused of being involved in a covert operation, not wearing full military uniform, and displaying the Japanese flag to confuse their enemies. They were found guilty and sentenced to death.

On July 7, they were taken to a hill outside Singapore where they talked, smoked last cigarettes, and shook hands with one another. They were then ceremonially executed by the sword in the warrior tradition, their bodies falling into the graves prepared for them.

After the war, the bodies of the 10 were exhumed and, together with the bodies of those who died on the islands near Singapore, including Ivan Lyon, were buried in the Kranji war cemetery on Singapore Island.

In 1957, Z Force veterans found the *Krait,* virtually a hulk, hauling timber on the Borneo coast. She was brought back to Australia, restored, and now sits in the National Maritime Museum in Sydney. □

Author John Brown has contributed to WWII History *with stories on the ordeal of the Mediterranean island of Malta and the Battle of El Alamein. He hails from Minyama, Queensland, Australia.*

HERMANN HISTORICA

Oct. 5th, 2009:
A Colt M 1873 SAA revolver

Oct. 9th, 2009: Orders, decorations and documents of a German WWII fighter ace

Nov. 12th-13th, 2009:
A Paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne in Normandy

Oct. 6th, 2009:
A Submachine Gun, Cal. .45, M3, deactivated

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October 9th
German Historical Collectibles 1919-1989

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"La Percée d'Avranches"
The entire collection to be sold by auction

Nov. 12th-13th, 2009:
A US.M1 helmet, D-Day relic from Omaha Beach

Oct. 9th, 2009: An extremely rare cypher machine "Enigma G 111"

Nov. 12th-13th, 2009:
A Waffen-SS soldier from the museum's display

Nov. 12th-13th, 2009:
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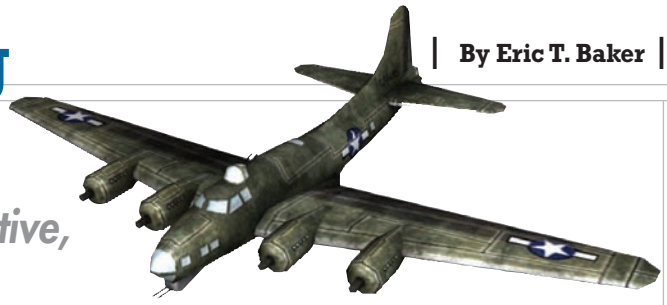
Simulation Gaming

| By Eric T. Baker |



If you aspire to being Churchill, check out Hearts of Iron III *from Paradox Interactive, a strategy game with a capital S.*

When you sit down to start a game of ***Hearts of Iron III*** for the PC from Paradox Interactive, you can choose any year from 1936 to 1948 and play one of 150 different countries. This is a strategy game with a capitol S that lets you model the WWII era from almost anywhere that was important at that time. Of course, most players will want to play Germany or Japan or America since one of these powers has the best chance of world domination, but the game can be played from the point of view of any of the world's smaller powers.

The heart of the game is the world map. It is broken up into 14,000 land and sea provinces. That is obviously far too much for one player to track individually, so the game employs a system of color overlays to help you see where to focus. For instance, on the intelligence overlay, provinces take on a color based on how much your spies are telling you about it. Clicks on the diplomatic, production, materials, units, and other overlays tell the story of the world as it is that turn.

While the map with its colored overlays is the key to understanding the world, the game's AI is the key to managing the many variables. For instance, the science system lets you explore both practical science (upgrades for units that can be delivered in the short term) and theoretical science (broader upgrades that will take much longer to appear) in a number of different directions. You can micro-manage these tracks turn after turn, or you can turn some or all of them over to the AI to advance.

Like the science system, you can also manage or delegate with the diplomacy and combat screens. In the unlikely event that you want to open a two-front war, you can assign objectives, units, and combat style to AI commanders on one front and leave them to it while you are much more hands on in fighting the other front. *HoI3* is a big game for a player with a lot of time to spend really building up a country. It is a game for players who aspire to being Churchill more than they dream of being Montgomery, but it is also a game where the player can be both.

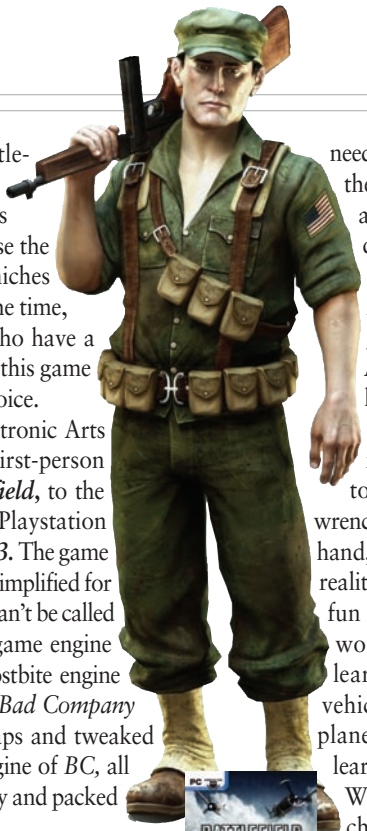
In the context of a global conflict, 10 square miles doesn't seem like that big a space, but in the case of a battlefield on which a video game is played, 10 square miles is huge. Ten square miles is the area on which you command your troops in ***Officers: World War II*** by 3A games for the PC. It is a real-time strategy game, and most RTS games are played on a much smaller area with fewer units of smaller sizes. *Officers* can have as many as 1,500 units involved in a battle.

The setting of *Officers* is Europe after the D-Day invasion. In the single-player game, you take the role of a United States commander and fight your way through a series of "historical" scenarios. In the multiplayer game, which allows up to eight players at once, the players can also play the German and Russian armies. Unlike traditional RTS play, there is no need to build factories in *Officers,* but players do need to capture strategic points to unlock reinforcements. Conveniently, the game is won by controlling all the strategic points, so players have a unity of purpose in directing their units.

There are 70 different unit types in *Officers,* but unlike many RTS games, there is no emphasis on unlocking the different types. Players are pretty much given all the

game has to fight with right from the start, including air strikes and artillery support. This makes for exciting battles right out of the box, but it hurts the game as the campaign progresses because there is nothing new to add to the battles. The tactics the players use in the first couple of battles are the ones they will still be using in the last couple.

What will convince you to play *Officers* instead of one of the other WWII-themed RTS games is the setting (post D-Day i sa rich time to be in command of the U.S. units) and the size of the battles. Players who want the excitement of controlling so many units over such a large area will



enjoy *Officers*. A large battlefield means longer games, though, and it means games that are harder to end because the Nazi remnants have more niches to hide in. For players with the time, and particularly for those who have a friend who will play them in this game online, *Officers* is a good choice.

Speaking of online ... Electronic Arts has brought its signature first-person online combat game, ***Battlefield***, to the Xbox Live Arcade and the Playstation Network with ***Battlefield 1943***. The game is essentially *Battlefield 1942* simplified for playing on the console, but it can't be called a port because the original game engine has been replaced by the Frostbite engine used in last year's *Battlefield Bad Company* game. So it is the resized maps and tweaked textures of *1942* with the engine of *BC*, all of it optimized for console play and packed into a 600 meg download.

Like the other *Battlefield* games, *1943* is not an attempt to accurately model WWII combat. This is a shooter that strives to make player vs. player combat fun while everyone wears WWII outfits and shoots guns that have a WWII look. The game pits U.S. Marines against the Japanese Imperial Army on four different battlefields based on Wake Island, Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, and Coral Sea. Players spawn as one of three classes: Infantry, Rifleman, and Scout. There can be up to 24 players on a map and the players can group themselves into four-man squads. Players then battle until one side is out of respawns, a process that can be accelerated by holding various strategic points on the map.

An example of how gameplay trumps the need for reality in the game is that the Scout Class's primary small arm is a sniper rifle. The designers, however, didn't have the textures for the Arisaka rifle on hand, so the Japanese use a German rifle. Another is that a player's health regenerates if he is not taking damage, and that infantrymen can heal damage to vehicles by using their wrench tool on them. On the other hand, the "one shot you're done" reality would not have been much fun in this sort of game, nor would forcing the players to learn realistic controls for the vehicles, although the fighter planes, in particular, do have a learning curve.

What made the *Battlefield* franchise stand out from other online shooters and what has been retained in *1943* is the way characters respawn after death. Characters aren't just automatically assigned to spawn points by the game. Players can choose to spawn at any strategic point their side holds, or they can spawn next to any of their squad mates, even in a vehicle if there is an open seat. This system means that players can stay in the battle where they are needed and actually makes dying a part of the strategy of the game.

While there are only four maps in this downloadable version of the franchise, and one of those has to be unlocked by making a lot of kills on the other three, the play of *1943* doesn't get repetitive because so much of the terrain is destructible. A village that was a door-to-door bloodbath in one game may be leveled by an air strike in the next, turned into a field where jeeps and fighter craft duel. So while not a simulation, the low price, frantic pace, and drop in, drop out gameplay make *Battlefield 1943* an excellent casual game for any WWII fan.

If you are looking for realism and simulation in your video wargames you should check out ***Theater of War 2: Africa 1943*** for the PC from Battlefront games. This is a tactical-level game modeling combat in the closing days of the North African campaign on the level of individual vehicles and soldiers. A typical battle will see you controlling about 50 soldiers and vehicles. Each will have their own stats and skills. Some battles will depend on sorting through the available soldiers to find the best driver and gunner to man your best tank.

A world away from the damage physics of *Battlefield*, *To W2* crunches the numbers on each shell and bullet fired in the game. Tanks are modeled with their different, historically accurate armors so that the effect of shells against them takes into account not only the type of shell, but also where and at what angle it hits the tank. The tank and its crew's effectiveness is adjusted as appropriate. This level of detail extends to other units as well. Even individual soldiers can suffer limb wounds that partially incapacitate them without removing them completely from the battle.

Some games that do this sort of number crunching don't have the graphics to show it, but *To W2* does. Gun crew animations, tank crew bailouts, individual soldiers running and firing and dying, all these things are animated in detail. That's the good news. The bad news is that the animations are not as optimized as they might have been in a higher budget game. Even with a good computer and a graphics card, the action will go slide show as soon as the rounds start flying at the highest detail levels.

There are three campaigns in *To W2*: British, German, and American. Each has linked scenarios where surviving troops from one battle can be leveled and used in the next. It takes replays just to succeed in the battles, much less to win them with enough troops to make the leveling worthwhile. The AI makes up for its lack of deep thinking with some very accurate gunnery. Still, this is a game for people who want to see real warfare modeled, and who want to spend an hour or a two at a time leading their forces to victory by commanding one unit at time. □

By Mason B. Webb

National Archives

"Monument Officer" Captain Deane Keller poses with Botticelli's *La Primavera,* one of the masterpieces in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. The painting was stored in the villa of Montegufoni and saved from the Nazis.

Rescuing Nazi Plunder

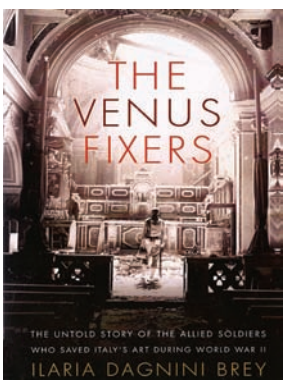
The men who saved Italy's art treasures are honored in a new book.

BESIDES BEING A DESTROYER OF LIVES AND CITIES, WAR ALSO DESTROYS precious works of art and the ancient monuments of civilization. But if the enemy is holed up in a 1,000-year-old abbey or entrenched outside a palace or museum filled with precious paintings and sculpture, how is one destroyed without harming the other?

This was the dilemma facing Allied armies after invading Italy, arguably the most art-rich country in the world. In what was surely one of the most unusual acts of benevolence in the history of warfare, the Allied armies in Italy put together special teams of experts in art and architecture and sent them into the front lines to brief combat commanders on the vulnerable treasures ahead of them with a plea to spare, if at all possible, the collections.

Of course, not all artistic and architectural treasures were spared. The 1943 Allied bombing of the ancient Benedictine abbey atop Monte Cassino is one example of where military exigencies took precedence over preservation. But, for the most part, the vast bulk of Italy's irreplaceable works of art managed to survive the war—and not by luck.

For her engaging and highly original work, *The Venus Fixers: The Untold Story of the Allied Soldiers Who Saved Italy's Art During World War II* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 2009, 304 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $25.00), Italian-born journalist Ilaria Dagnini Brey was granted access to private archives that few other writers have seen and goes into great detail to document the heretofore unsung work of these specialists.



A presidentially appointed American commission known as the Second Roberts Commission was set up specifically to deal with the immense problems that a preservation program in an active war zone presented. The initiative, as one general put it, was "without historical precedence in any military campaign."

Much of Brey's book is devoted to the city of Florence, the former home of many of the world's finest artists and a repository to many of mankind's

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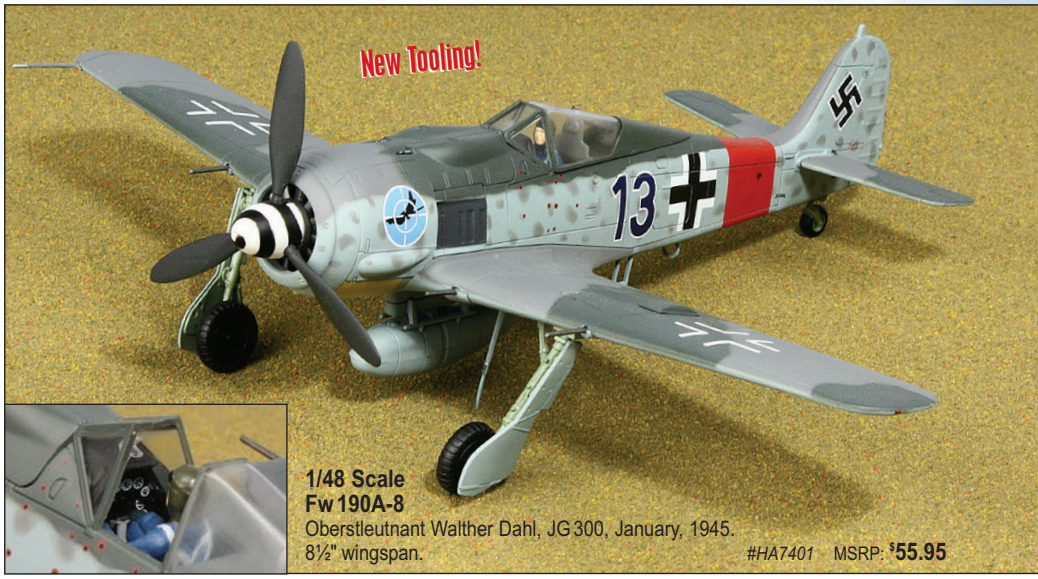

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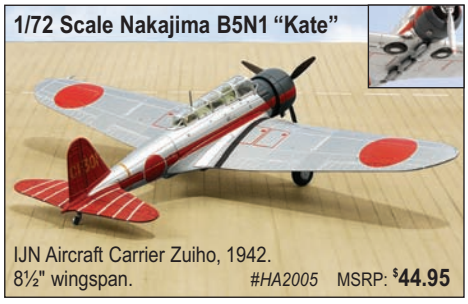

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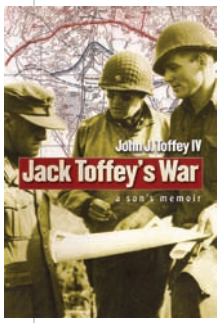
greatest artistic achievements. The author writes, "For nearly four years before the Allied air raid [of March 11, 1944], the city's celebrated church facades had been walled in by sandbags, their windows boarded with timber. Lorenzo Ghiberti's bronze doors, praised by Michelangelo as 'truly worthy of being the Gates of Paradise,' had been removed from the Baptistry of Saint John, and the ancient octagonal building now stared as if from empty sockets at the cathedral in front. Statues, shrouded in plastic and cloth, had disappeared beneath bizarre-looking brick domes, and the whole city seemed like an infirm body wrapped in bandages for wounds yet to be inflicted."

The men responsible for saving places like Florence—a motley group of art historians, curators, professors, and passionate amateur experts—were known as "Monuments Officers" or the "Venus Fixers." Their efforts augmented those of local curators who had been working furiously for years to keep the irreplaceable treasures out of harm's way by hiding paintings in cellars and tombs.

Often working as shells exploded around them, the Venus Fixers collaborated with the local curators to shore up tottering palaces and cathedrals, safeguarded works by Michelangelo and Botticelli and others, prevented looting by enemy and Allied soldiers alike, and, in one case, even blocked a Nazi convoy of stolen paintings bound for the notorious art thief Hermann Göring's birthday celebration.

The Venus Fixers is a magical work that anyone with the slightest interest in the fate of art treasures and humanity in wartime must read.

Jack Toffey's War: A Son's Memoir, by John J. Toffey IV, Fordham University Press, New York, 2008, 269 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography index, hardcover, $29.95



In 1996, John J. Toffey IV made a remarkable discovery: the letters that his father, Jack Toffey, a battalion commander, had written home during the war. The letters launched the younger Toffey on a journey to learn more about his father, the war, and its impact on hometown Ohio.

Called up during the mobilization in 1940, Jack Toffey was a junior officer in the 44th Infantry Division. Over the course of the next few years, Toffey was transferred to the 9th Infantry Division, promoted to lieutenant colonel, given command of a battalion, and participated in the invasion of North Africa, where he was first wounded.

Toffey had recuperated by the time the 9th was picked to be one of the divisions going into Sicily, and he was made executive officer of one of the regiments. A short time later, after the invasion of mainland Italy, he was put in command of an artillery battalion. He then requested a transfer to the 3rd Infantry Division, a request that was granted, and he was back to commanding a battalion of foot soldiers.

The invasion of Anzio, an "end run" around the stalemate at Monte Cassino and the Gustav Line in January 1944, would prove to be Toffey's demise, however. In March, he was made regimental executive officer of the 7th Infantry Regiment which, ordinarily, would have been a respite from the direct dangers of combat. But Toffey was not the kind of officer who took shelter far behind the front lines.

After the Allied breakout from the beachhead at the end of May, Toffey was in his favorite place, with the men at the front. Two days before Rome was captured, while coordinating an attack, he was killed by enemy fire. Jack Toffey, along with 7,861 other American soldiers, is buried beneath a simple, white marble cross at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery at Nettuno, Italy, next to Anzio. And now, thanks to his son's moving and highly personal book, Jack Toffey has an epitaph to his service and his sacrifice. No man could ask for a finer one.

Military Sun Helmets of the World, by Peter Suciu (with Stuart Bates), Service Publications, Ottawa, Canada, 2009, 93 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $34.95.

The sun helmet, or "pith" helmet as it is commonly known, has long been the choice of headgear for archaeologists, explorers, and big game hunters. And also of the military.

As author Peter Suciu notes, "The helmets

Short Bursts

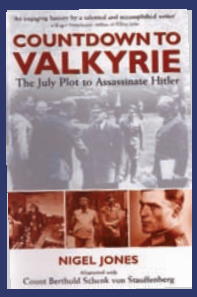
The Sky My Kingdom: Memoirs of the Famous German World War II Test Pilot, by Hanna Reitsch, Casemate, Drexel Hill, PA, 2009 (originally published 1951), 265 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $29.95.

Hanna Reitsch has been described as "Hitler's favorite pilot," and no wonder. She was attractive, smart, courageous, and totally devoted to her Führer and the Nazi cause. She was one of only two women awarded the Iron Cross First Class during World War II and the only woman to receive the Luftwaffe Combined Pilot and Observer Badge with Diamonds.

She flew many of Germany's most radical and dangerous aircraft designs, including the rocket-propelled Me-163 and a manned version of the V-1 buzz bomb, and she survived many accidents, coming away badly injured on numerous occasions. In the final days of the Third Reich, she even landed a plane on the street near the Führerbunker in the heart of Berlin while Soviet shells crashed all around in a vain attempt to fly Josef Goebbels's children to safety.

Despite her questionable politics and allegiances, Hanna Reitsch was an outstanding pilot and a remarkable woman. Her detailed yet highly readable memoir is equally remarkable, reflecting as it does her sheer exuberance in the joys of flying as well as providing insight into the plans of the Luftwaffe and its operations during the war.

Countdown to Valkyrie: The July Plot to Assassinate Hitler, by Nigel Jones, Frontline Books, London, UK, 2009, 308 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $26.00.



More than 40 attempts to assassinate Hitler were made in his lifetime, but he seemed to live a charmed life. None of the myriad attempts came closer to succeeding than the plot of July 20, 1944, by some of the officers he trusted most.

Nigel Jones's riveting account of the plot provides the reader with a pulse-pounding narrative that goes from the planning, the execution, and the tragic aftermath of the failed attempt to kill the Führer at his forward headquarters on the Eastern Front.

Jones details the growth of German discontent, resistance to Hitler and his iron-fisted rule, and the earlier efforts to do away with him. This is the fullest, most-detailed account yet of this key episode in the history of World War II.

have a civilian origin and were gradually adopted by the military, but even to collectors of military headdress the sun helmet is not a combat item. While certainly not part of a dress uniform, sun helmets are the sort of 'other helmet' to many collectors. However, the sun helmet's history on the battlefield is a long one, and while offering little or any ballistic protection, the sun helmets provided adequate protection from the rays above, and that was, after all, its intended purpose."

In his engaging work, lavishly illustrated by drawings and color photos of helmets in his own extensive collection, Suciu begins with the history of the helmet as used by the British Army in the 19th century in some of the hottest regions in the world, Abyssinia, India, Zulu country, and more.

Suciu also delves into the use of the helmet by other nations, including France, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Japan, the U.S., and Germany (images of Afrika Korps troops in sun helmet are iconic).

Even if one is not a collector of headgear, Suciu's book makes for fascinating reading.

Forgotten Weapon: U.S. Navy Airships and the U-Boat War, by William F. Althoff, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2009, 432 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $25.00.

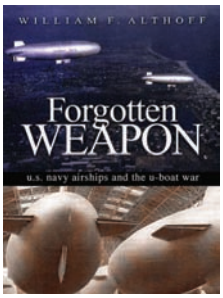
Here's another book on another offbeat, but no less interesting subject—airships.

Commonly called "blimps," these bulbous, slow-moving denizens of the air seem quaint and almost comical today. In an era of computers, missiles, spy satellites, and electronic warfare, the Navy's nonrigid airship seems an anachronism, a 20th-century platform predestined for obscurity.

Indeed, the widespread ignorance today of the airship's existence and role in World War II is remarkable, and it is easy to dismiss it as some sort of military aberration.

From 1935 to 1945, nonrigid airships were operated by the U.S. Navy to keep an eye on German submarines that were prowling along the Eastern Seaboard. Once spotted, the U-boats became targets for air and surface craft to attack them. U-boat commanders learned to steer clear of the blimps.

Many have questioned the military effectiveness of the blimp force, however. Only one is known to have assisted in the sinking of a U-boat and possibly damaging three others.



Althoff candidly acknowledges this and questions the blimps' limited contribution to the overall war effort. As he writes, "Was [the airship] of sufficient value to offset the expenditure in industrial capacity, personnel, airbases, and special facilities—resources better applied elsewhere?" Could the 7,000 Navy personnel assigned to airship duties have been better utilized in other, more offensive roles? The Navy must have agreed for, with victory and the advent of more advanced technologies, the airship went the way of the horse cavalry, its service no longer needed for the conduct of modern military operations.

Author Althoff has done a superb job in giving the airship its due by crafting this entertaining and informative volume. Found within its 432 pages are scores of photos that detail the design, construction, and operation of these "gas bags," plus a text that provides readers with everything they never knew about this unusual craft.

Although the blimps' contributions to victory were marginal, Althoff's fine book is a loving tribute to the airships and the men who flew and maintained them.

Battle of Surigao Strait, by Anthony P. Tully, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 2009, 329 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $27.95.

Anthony Tully gave the world a stunning portrait of the Battle of Midway in his (and co-author Jon Parshall's) *Shattered Sword*. He reprises that achievement with *Battle of Surigao Strait*, a finely wrought account of the epic naval engagement of Leyte Gulf that lasted from October 23-26, 1944.

During those three crucial days, the Imperial Japanese Navy, in its final major effort of the war, attempted to stop the American invasion and liberation of the Philippines. What ensued was an all-out slugfest on the high seas and the last time battleships would fight each other in a surface engagement.

With dramatic clarity and a fine prose style, Tully gives the reader an hour-by-hour, blow-by-blow description of the conflict in which two Japanese fleets of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers threw themselves in a fanatical charge against an American fleet that included five battleships that had been resurrected after the debacle at Pearl Harbor three years earlier.

WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE'S

2009 BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD

For the past three years, the editors of *WWII History* magazine have nominated the finest books received during the previous 12 months and then tried to winnow the list of finalists down to just one. As usual, given the high quality of nominated books, the task proved to be monumental. Nevertheless, here are our finalists for 2009:

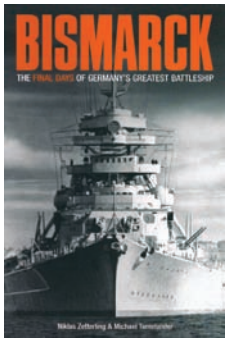
- ***Command of Honor: General Lucian Truscott's Path to Victory in World War II***, by H. Paul Jeffers (reviewed in January issue)
- ***Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust***, by Theodore S. Hamerow (reviewed in the March issue)
- ***Pearl Harbor Countdown: Admiral James O. Richardson***, by Skipper Steely (reviewed in the May issue)
- ***Danger's Hour: The Story of the USS Bunker Hill and the Kamikaze Pilot Who Crippled Her***, by Maxwell T. Kennedy (reviewed in the July issue)
- ***Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle***, by Oleg V. Khlevnuik (reviewed in September issue)
- ***Winston Churchill: The Flawed Genius of World War II***, by Christopher Catherwood (reviewed in November issue)
- ***The Venus Fixers: The Untold Story of the Allied Soldiers Who Saved Italy's Art During World War II***, by Ilaria Dagnini Brey (reviewed in this issue)

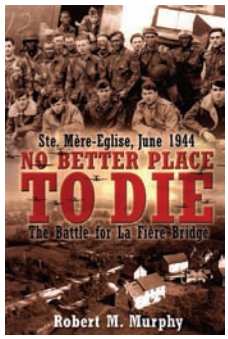
And the winner is...

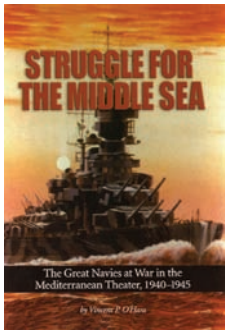
Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust, by Theodore S. Hamerow. A good book should make one think, and Hamerow's work does that in spades, challenging common assumptions and perceptions about the Holocaust and what civilization knew and when it knew. As we said in our March review, "It is an uncomfortable read, but one that is essential if we are to understand the full meaning of World War II and the Holocaust."

Tully's account also goes far to correct myths and inaccurate versions of the battle found in some earlier books. He sheds new light on tactical and staff decisions that have puzzled many historians. Some of his revisions may appear as drastic as they will be controversial, but all are backed by solid evidence uncovered after years of careful research.

Making extensive use of unpublished records (such as never-before-translated Japanese records) and survivor testimonies, Tully lifts the cloak of ambiguity and mystery that has shrouded the events of that fateful night and produces a truly new reassessment of one of the war's most pivotal naval clashes.







Bismarck: The Final Days of Germany's Greatest Battleship, by Niklas Zetterling and Michael Tamelander, Casemate, Drexel Hill, PA, 2009, 320 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $32.95.

Another outstanding book about naval warfare is *Bismarck,* in which Swedish authors Zetterling and Tamelander recount the British effort to rid the seas of the German battleship that was the most powerful warship of its day. Launched in February 1939, *Bismarck* was an engineering and technological masterpiece: a displacement of over 41,000 tons, nearly the length of three football fields, bristling with eight 15-inch, radar-guided guns, and a propulsion system capable of producing a top speed of 31 knots.

The British rightly worried that, unrestrained, the enemy ship could devastate shipping in the Atlantic and so, in the spring of 1941, the order was given by the Admiralty to the Home Fleet: Sink the *Bismarck!*

On her maiden combat voyage, *Bismarck* left the Baltic Sea port of Gotenhafen, Poland, on the night of May 18, 1941, to raid American Lend-Lease convoys crossing the North Atlantic but was soon discovered while passing through Norwegian waters. The pride of the Royal Navy, the battlecruiser HMS *Hood,* with the new battleship HMS *Prince of Wales,* was dispatched from Scapa Flow to intercept her. But finding the behemoth on the high seas proved to be a major challenge.

At last *Bismarck* was spotted near Iceland, and a long chase ensued. On May 24, Bismarck and her accompanying heavy cruiser, *Prinz Eugen,* were confronted off the coast of Greenland, but the hunters quickly became the hunted. *Bismarck* utterly destroyed *Hood* within minutes, and only three of her 1,400-man crew survived. *Prince of Wales* was also badly damaged but stayed afloat.

The two German ships then sailed farther south but the Home Fleet was determined to stop them. Four capital ships, including the battleships *King George V* and *Rodney,* supported by aircraft from the carriers *Victorious* and *Ark Royal,* were sent out to find them.

As luck would have it, the aircraft found the *Bismarck* alone, far from home, and unguarded by *Prinz Eugen,* and a direct hit by an aerial torpedo knocked out her rudder. Unable to maneuver, *Bismarck* became easy prey for the trailing British task force, and nearly 2,000 men went down with her.

Based on official records and accounts from survivors of these titanic battles and the latest historical discoveries (including the recently discovered wreck of *Bismarck*), the book is written in a real-time, you-are-there style that conveys all the anxiety of actual combat at sea. Highly recommended.

No Better Place to Die: The Battle for La Fière Bridge, Ste. Mère-Eglise, June 1944, by Robert M. Murphy, Casemate, Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, 2009, 272 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $32.95.

Anyone who visits the French village of Ste. Mère-Eglise in Normandy probably will come across a street named "Rue Robert Murphy," and the visitor is likely to ask, "Who is Robert Murphy?"

The answer is held in this outstanding memoir by Murphy, one of the Pathfinders from the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, who parachuted into France in the early morning hours of June 6, 1944.

Pathfinders had one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs in Operation Overlord, for it was they who were assigned the task of arriving before the main wave of transport planes and lighting the pitch-black drop zones so the transport pilots would know when and where to release their human cargo.

Murphy details the 82nd's mission: to cap-

ture the vital crossroads town of Ste. Mère-Eglise and seize the bridge over the Merderet River at La Fière to prevent a German counter-attack from disrupting the amphibious landings at Utah Beach. Of crucial importance, the bridges and raised causeways at La Fière and nearby Chef-du-Pont were the key to Allied success on D-Day, for they provided the U.S. 4th Infantry Division with its only dry route inland from Utah Beach, as the Germans had flooded the surrounding countryside. The descriptions of the fierce fighting for the bridge at La Fière are some of the most compelling ever written.

Murphy's book is filled with more than just his personal exploits. He has also included accounts and memoirs from many of his comrades, plus supporting documents that give a fuller picture of what the 82nd accomplished on D-Day and the days after.

Sadly, Murphy passed away in 2008, but the accounts of his and his fellow parachutists' contributions to victory in Europe will live forever.

Struggle for the Middle Sea: The Great Navies at War in the Mediterranean Theater, 1940-1945, by Vincent P. O'Hara, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2009, 324 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $34.95.

The Mediterranean Sea was the most hotly contested body of water in World War II. As the maritime crossroads where Europe, Asia, and Africa meet, more major naval actions were fought in the "Middle Sea" than in either the Atlantic or Pacific.

Despite its importance, remarkably little has been written about the subject, and what exists is largely one-sided and outdated. O'Hara's fresh look at the naval war that raged across the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Greece analyzes the actions and performances of the five major navies—the British, French, Italian, German, and American—that fought there during the lengthy campaign and objectively examines the national imperatives that drove each combatant nation's maritime strategy.

O'Hara's work avoids the old myths that haunt this theater of war, such as Great Britain enjoying a moral advantage over Italy, or the French being Germany's puppet, or the North African campaign significantly contributing to the eventual Allied victory.

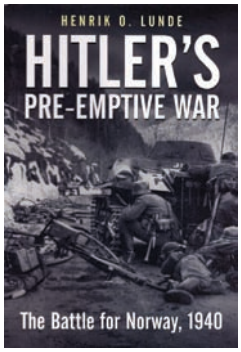
The author documents how the British Royal Navy, despite brilliant victories, was bled white in a campaign with questionable strategic goals; how Italy followed its own naval strategy, much to the frustration of its German ally; and how the French Navy was the strength of the independent French state,

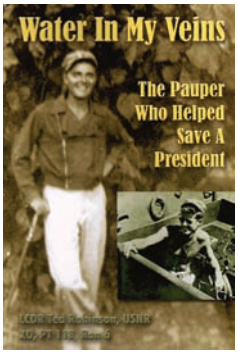
and how it fought the Allies and rejected the Axis to maintain that independence.

Unlike other works on the subject, *Struggle for the Middle Sea* provides a complete history of the entire five-year campaign from all perspectives and covers Germany's largely unknown and extremely successful struggle to employ sea power in the Mediterranean after the Italian capitulation.

Hitler's Pre-Emptive War: The Battle for Norway, 1940, by Henrik O. Lunde, Casemate, Drexel Hill, PA, 2009, 590 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $34.95.

Little has been published in the U.S. about Nazi Germany's invasion of Norway, so this book comes as a refreshing and definitive account of that campaign.





In April 1940, a month before his armies crossed the borders of France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, Hitler launched an unprovoked invasion of Norway, an invasion even his general staff initially opposed as being "lunatic" and of little military value.

The unexpected, 62-day war in Norway turned out to be a stunning success for the Germans. It was the first time in history that land, sea, air, and specialized forces were fully involved in a coordinated campaign in another country. It was also the first direct clash between German and British forces and became a testing ground for the innovations in equipment and doctrine developed since the Great War.

For example, in Norway the effect of air power on both land and naval operations caused a fundamental shift in how this new weapon was perceived. The campaign also saw the first use of airborne troops to seize airfields and key objectives far behind enemy lines.

As Lunde, a retired, Norway-born American Army officer, points out, many of the problems on the Allied side were ones that perpetually face military planners and operators. The campaign revealed serious deficiencies in Allied command structure, inter-Allied cooperation and coordination, and the unfortunate effects of strong individuals unwilling to compromise.

The Allies also failed to devise an effective strategy until it was too late. Meanwhile, the Germans held the initiative and, by the end of the campaign, some 5,000 of their troops around Narvik were able to hold off some 30,000 Allied and Norwegian troops until the Allies were compelled to withdraw.

Lunde has crafted a brilliant, long-overdue study of this early, virtually unknown campaign and one that deserves a wide readership.

Water in My Veins: How a Pauper Helped Save a President, by Ted Robinson, Merriam Press, Bennington, VT, 2009, 455 pp., photographs, maps, hardcover, $26.00.

By now, almost everyone is familiar with the wartime saga of Lieutenant (j.g.) John F. Kennedy and *PT-109*—how, in the roiling waters around Guadalcanal, Kennedy's boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer and how the young officer, in spite of his own injuries, continually rescued members of his crew.

Now comes an excellent memoir by Ted Robinson, possibly the last living Navy officer who personally knew the man who would go on to become the 35th President of the United States. Growing up in a poverty-stricken family in New York during the Great Depression, Robinson went on to graduate from Duke University and joined the Navy a few months before Pearl Harbor to "see the world." Little did he know the fate that awaited him.

As a young officer assigned to a PT-boat squadron, Ensign Robinson eventually wound up in the Pacific and at a base on the island of Tulagi, near Guadalcanal in the Solomons. When the "Tokyo Express," a convoy of Japanese warships full of reinforcements, came roaring down The Slot on the night of August 1, 1943, the PT boats were sent out to intercept them. Robinson's boat, *PT-159,* was one of those involved in the harrowing action. In the melée, Kennedy's boat was smashed and the survivors dumped into the water.

Robinson was on one of the two PT boats that went out to search for and rescue Kennedy and his crew in the days after the attack, and was the person to whom the natives delivered the famous coconut on which Kennedy had carved the news that he and 10 other crewmen of *PT-109* were still alive. Ensign Robinson was also involved in the operation to pick up Kennedy and the other survivors from their island hideout and bring them back to safety.

While there is much more to be said about this book, suffice it to say that *Water in My Veins* is a very entertaining read. □

Continued from page 69

(light) Division. The 61st, 96th, 170th, and 227th Infantry Divisions, which had been heavily engaged since the beginning of the battle, all had to be disbanded due to heavy losses.

The SS Police Division and the 11th and 21st Infantry Divisions desperately sought to hold the Siniavino position. Throughout the day, Soviet mortar rounds and artillery shells bombarded the German lines on the Siniavino Heights. At night, in extreme cold, the 142nd Naval and 123rd Rifle Brigades charged again and again but could not overcome the German defenses. So strong were the German positions and so vulnerable the Soviet approaches through the marsh that General Nicolai Simoniak, the commander of the 136th Rifle Division, refused Zhukov's direct orders to join the attack.

"Trotskyite! Passive resister!" shouted Zhukov over a high-security line. "Who are those cowards of yours? Who doesn't want to fight?" Simoniak retorted that there were no cowards in the Sixty-seventh Army. Simoniak's pessimism proved correct as the Soviets were unable to capture the heights proper but did manage to fight their way two miles southwest to capture Poselok No. 6.

A more serious attempt to outflank the Siniavino Heights from the west failed when the 102nd Rifle and the 220th Tank Brigades and the 123rd Rifle Division were unable to overcome the German defenses at Gorodok. On the eastern extreme flank of the battle, Juschkat and his platoon of the 1st Infantry Division still held out at Gontovaia. For eight days, Juschkat and his men had repelled multiple Soviet attacks each day, coming at them from two sides. Finally, a pioneer company came up to lend support.

While Juschkat was able to get some rest, on January 21 Sergeant First Class Hans Bölter walked out of the field hospital to return to the battle. Saddened by the somber news of Gerdtell's death, Bölter climbed back into a Tiger the next day. On a second day of reconnaissance, he happened upon a group of KV-1 tanks, destroying two and causing the rest to flee. From north and east of Gorodok to south of Poselok No. 6, along the Siniavino Heights east to Gontovaia Lipka, the German front held.

On January 31, the Soviets broke into Siniavino in a final violent effort but were thrown out by an 11th Infantry Division counterattack. Exhausted and drained, the Soviet attacks ended when Meretskov suspended the battle.

Although the final objective of Siniavino eluded them, the Soviets secured the all-important land corridor to Leningrad. They had captured Shlisselburg, Marino, Lipka, and Poselok Nos. 1-8. To acknowledge their success, the 136th and the 327th Rifle Divisions were designated as the 63rd and 64th Guards Rifle Divisions, respectively, and the 61st Tank Brigade became the 30th Guards Tank Brigade. The 61st Tank Brigade commander was promoted to colonel. Stalin promoted General Zhukov to marshal of the Soviet Union on the day Shlisselburg fell.

Characteristically, Zukhov's victory did not come cheap. Some 33,940 Soviet soldiers were dead, captured, or missing, and there were 81,142 wounded, a total of 115,082 casualties out of 302,800 troops engaged. Equipment losses were heavy as well, with the Sixty-seventh Army alone losing 225 tanks.

The Germans suffered at least 12,000 dead, considerably fewer than the Soviets, but these were losses the Eighteenth Army could ill afford. On January 31, a Wehrmacht communiqué formally acknowledged its defeat to the troops: "Between Lake Illmen and the Gulf of Finland the Soviets have been able to gain more ground despite local defensive successes by our forces. The defensive fighting in this area is continuing with undiminished intensity."

Almost all of the German units had managed to fight their way out of the pocket, however, bringing with them 2,000 wounded; and very few Germans were taken prisoner. All the heavy equipment had to remain behind but was destroyed before it could fall into Soviet hands.

German tactical success could not obscure the Soviet strategic victory. Only a week after the end of the battle, the Soviets laid down a new rail line through the land corridor from Poliany to Shlisselburg. The bread rations shipped to Leningrad more than doubled. The days of starvation were over. However, because the corridor was only 5-6 miles wide, any Soviet communications and supply lines remained subject to German assaults and artillery strikes.

From their observation posts on the shell-cratered Siniavino Heights, the Germans could see all the way to Lake Ladoga. Operation Spark proved to be only the first phase of the Second Battle of Lake Ladoga, which would last until April as Stalin's northern armies readied themselves for the next great assault on the Third Reich's Army Group North. □

Canadian author Ludwig Dyck is a resident of Richmond, British Columbia, and holds a history degree from the University of British Columbia.

jochen peiper

Continued from page 75

at Le Renfort. They said that in their opinion death had been due to asphyxia but it was possible that this was not the only cause of death. They had no reason to think that the corpse was other than Peiper's and concluded, "In consequence the corpse found in the rubbish is certainly the one of Peiper."

In summary, it would seem that after firing the shotgun from the terrace to dissuade his attackers, Peiper reentered the house in order to save important personal papers and some of Sigurd's clothes. Having thrown these out of a bedroom window and the study door, he then continued to defend himself and his property by firing his other weapons but was overcome by smoke and died in the fire.

Not surprisingly, Sigurd Peiper wanted her husband buried in Germany, but before a German burial certificate could be issued a German autopsy had to be carried out. However, Arndt Fischer told the author in June 1991 that when the body arrived from France the head was missing. It appeared later but had been sliced up and the only tooth still present was split. The German autopsy was performed by Professor Spann of the Institute for Rechtsmedizin of the University of Munich, and Peiper's body was finally laid to rest in the cemetery of St. Anna's church at Schondorf am Ammersee in Bavaria, along with those of his father, mother, and two brothers.

One of the myths that persisted in Germany for years after the death was that the "establishment" had refused to release Peiper's body to the family for burial and that the headless torso was being kept under lock and key. This story was even repeated in a television documentary in the early 1990s. When the author told a former member of the Leibstandarte where the body was in fact buried, he was surprised to receive the following reply: "You will never know how very grateful many ex members of the LAH are for the info you sent."

Followup police investigations into the death at Le Renfort included ballistic tests, house searches of suspects, and dozens of interrogations. They all proved fruitless. The files in the Peiper case are still held in Dijon and have been seen by the author; there are four of them, and they are each 10cm thick.

Extraordinary scenes followed the events of July 14, 1976. After a claim the following day by an unknown group calling itself The Avengers, the *London Times* thundered: "Avengers kill SS colonel in France," and three days later another prominent British newspaper reported: "Cars full of sightseers converged this weekend on the small village of Traves ... to get a glimpse of the burnt out house of Joachim Peiper, the former SS colonel who perhaps is not dead."

Although the Communists denounced the killing, right-wing hooligans in France attacked a number of their party offices, and in West Germany a campaign started to have an "Oberst Peiper Denkmal" (memorial) erected at, of all places, Dachau. Peiper's son did not support this campaign but tried to persuade various German politicians to have his father's reputation cleared of all ignominy. He failed.

Due to the lack of irrefutable evidence that the body found in the ruins of Le Renfort was that of Peiper, it was inevitable that rumors would soon begin to circulate, particularly in Belgium and France, that he was still alive and living in South America. Odessa, it was said, had spirited him away and murdered some poor person of the correct height, build, and coloring to put in the Traves house before it was burned. Much was made of the statement in the police report that a tracker dog had sniffed a trail that ended at the road 50 meters from Ketelhut's house after crossing two meadows.

These theories, which still persist, ignore the fact that such complicated and dangerous actions were totally unnecessary—if Peiper had wanted to start a new life in 1976 on another continent, all he had to do was buy a ticket and catch an airplane. As his son told the author, "He aged during his last weeks, he was tired and not prepared to be thrown out and start anew."

Sigurd died in Munich on April 10, 1979, and was buried with the rest of the Peiper family.

Today Le Renfort is a sad sight. During the summer and at holiday times there are more German cars to be seen in Traves than French ones, and the ruins of the house are daubed in swastikas. Far from being the place of peace for which Peiper yearned after his tumultuous life, it has become a place of pilgrimage for neo-Nazis. It is unlikely that Peiper would have had any time for the majority of those who claim to honor his memory and flaunt the now illegal symbols that he and his comrades once wore with such pride. □

Michael Reynolds is a retired major general in the British Army. He is a veteran of the Korean War and the former director of NATO's Military Plans and Policy Division. Since retiring from the Army, he has written numerous well-received books on the subject of World War II, including The Devil's Adjutant—Jochen Peiper, Panzer Leader, *published by Casemate in 1997.*

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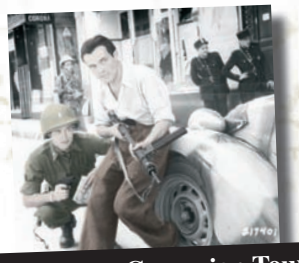

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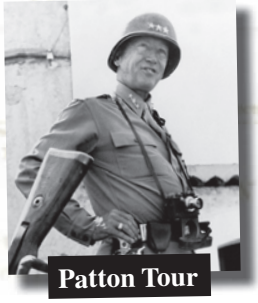

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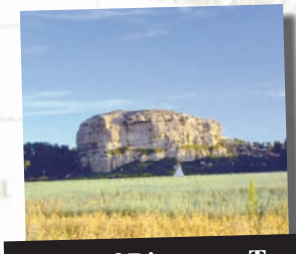

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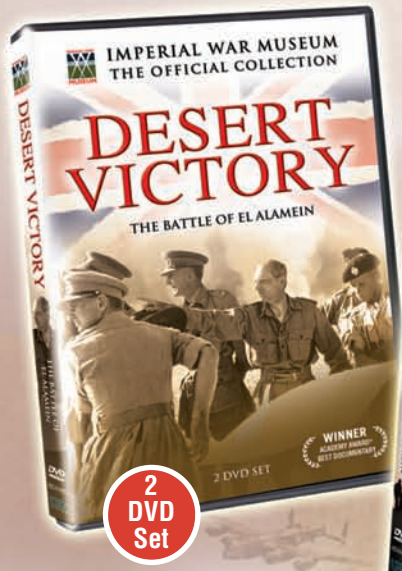

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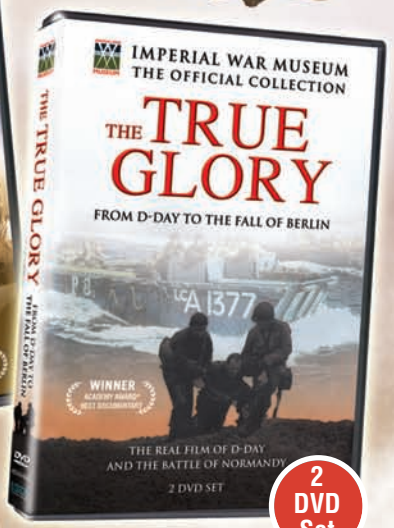

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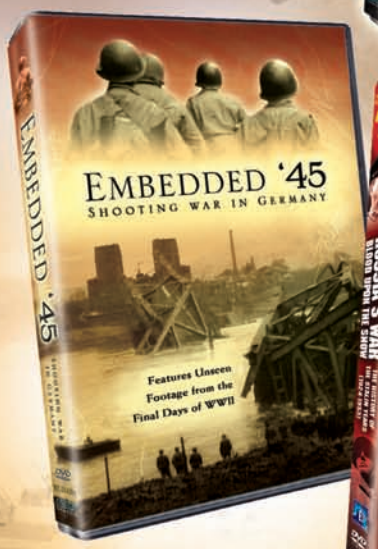

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